THE PHOENIX

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THE PHOENIX

Volume 4 No. 4 Summer 1974

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European Editor: *Nidra Poller* 139 *blvd. St. Germain Paris* 6 *France*
Published by Morning Star Press R.F.D. Haydenville, Mass. 01039
Year's subscription in territorial U.S.A. and Canada: $10.00
Foreign countries: $12.00 & *Single issues*: $3.00
Copyright 1974 *by Morning Star Press*
Cover design by Tom Penning
Editor: *James Cooney*

ANIMAL BOOK

Eric Felderman

The monkies are singing. Late at night I hear them. They are in the trees. "There are no trees." They sit in the trees and kiss each other and sing.

I feel it is coming. Each thing is lovely. The cup has reflections and they are out the window. My face was once transparent in the night. We learn to be more gentle and in bliss. But this is not spoken when humans speak together. I have many boxes. I have books of many colors. They can be touched. They are wonderfully rectangle and they fit together on a shelf.

I don't know anything, of course. Now and then the wisdom comes upon me and I know I know nothing. I'm so wise. I'm almost as wise as a monkey in a tree. They pet each other and listen to the wind.

Will You make them wise? Will You make them never to have been evil? Because their children make noises that are the same that cowboys make on television when they want to kill. I drive through the town. Oh see what they have done to

to their faces. The children are pulling on their teeth to make fangs. That man it tying rocks to his jaw to make a fearful scowl. One after another ran up to my car and shouted, "I am smarter than you. So I will kill you." Another, "I am stronger than you. So I will kill you." "I am more religious than you. So I will kill you." "I like money more than you. So I will kill you." "I have thinner lips than you. So I will kill you." "I kill better than you. So I will kill you."

The little birds were talking or singing together. I was walking home down the melting icy sidewalk. I heard a delicate mysterious grumbling in the sky. Where? I turned and looked up. Ah, the pigeon was still there. Sitting at the peak of a roof, mumbling deeply. To me? Does the pigeon love me? The pigeon watches over me, tenderly inspiring me with angelic snores.

I know what heaven looks like. I live there, with the birds, out my window, all morning, and their pale reflections, ghostly, in the pale bay. All man can say — oh, look; oh, look.

The human turns away and speaks of home. His mouth describes the air. He speaks of air. The music turns him on. He turns it on. The air is lovely and it makes him dance. He wants to tell you something so he does. He says I want to tell

you something. You are me. I know it now. I'm here alone. And I deserve these walls. I was a sinner when I was a baby. I committed sins against animals. Everyone gave me A-plus for my sins. Yet when I was young people spoke words unconsciously for my benefit, which I didn't understand. I laughed at the sinner against animals, who repented, not knowing years later, this repentance would fall on me suddenly like a house. And I would walk around, and I would walk around, knowing now years ago I did something — I didn't think about it — years ago I did a little thing that makes my life, my hopes, ridiculous, impossible; makes me know, I should do nothing, one who sinned, should do nothing, for he has a secret giggle which he will never overcome; it is his evil; let him sit and stare and not doom others with his charming lies. He cannot even condemn himself without making his confession charming. See how he weeps adroitly for the jury. As he bends to sob he can't help noticing a lady juror has her skirt pulled up above her knees. I should sit here. I must have been out of my mind. What was going on in my mind? What was going on in my mind? It is this that makes you thank time. This is what time is for, to remove you from your self, that awful thing you were. That is why your

hair is different and your face. Because you couldn't stand to be that one who sinned; oh you want to forget yourself. And time will help you. Time will help you.

When I was born a toad spoke to me, "you will sin against me, in the world of rrreality, but not really," and he hopped away before I learned to talk. I ran on my feet to make ends meet. The wheel went round Long Island Sound. An elephant love me with his nose.

People seem unable to talk to each other. When they try they make loud insulting noises. I try to pay attention to their conversations, although they talk in order to show their teeth, but all I hear are horrible hateful noises. Sometimes they look at me to show it's my turn to answer. But I know the only answer is a loud insulting noise, which would interrupt spiritual, sensual, and intellectual clarity, so I refrain. I walk beside the sea. I suspect my words are not relevant to the great decision of our time: whom to murder next.

Glass is nothing to light. I stand in the window transparent in the poem. My atoms invisibly dance.

Let us resemble elephants. The angels are all around. Beyond my shade the universe is whirling.

Beneath the sea animals are huge. Miles of light

are water which we know, by moving our tails and shifting flippers slightly, yes. What can an upright do? Words I speak to make us well are only filled with pain. I talk to myself. I talk to myself. This is possible, and yet, I think I would be tempted to whisper to somebody, and twould cause pain.

A burning globe is allowed me once again. The great balloon is burning as it rises. Each morn you baby me and let me see the colors and the water of the world. The birds are talking to their warm and shining brother. And I do too. I rise at five but only start to whisper when I see you rise.

Reason to be humble? I can cure nobody's pain (nor my own). The ancient man gets up to show us wisdom, but decorates the midnight with his cries.

Oddity of enlightenment. Previously each ecstasy, was celebrated, with a poem. But now each daily act, is bliss, yet I must not, pass each moment, with a pencil in my hand? Will a bird show me, heaven? I asked, oh bird, what are we doing? Someone so, beautiful who knows, what sunlight feels, like between clouds, must know, more than I do. Has come to pass, by multiplication, a country of angels, is living now, dispersed among the people. They write little poems to

birds. And God is listening with his giant ear.

When I was fifteen years I danced around the table. In the grocery a short man sold himself so his children could be crazy. Luckily green apples dipped in hot red jelly prove the Bronx can fly by night. I brought manna to the kangaroos. On thursday they let me feed the gods for free.

Perhaps my craziness takes the form of being happy. I've never left the zoo. The old men sit on benches folding brown newspapers and speaking the unknown language. Out of the air a camel bends to wet my hand. I skip through the dirt shaking my bag of crumbs.

Why don't elephants talk to me? I'll sit in my bathtub and write poems.

When you get sad you think there is something you should do. I only remember. The ducks are touching the sunlight. The sea moves slightly and the birds too. The music was my memory. The radio stops and I am stranded twenty years later in the light.

"The 1940's were an illusion. Don't you understand. It's gone. You're looking at the sea outside your window. Your rug is orange. The Bronx doesn't exist." A woman was sitting naked in a window. Out of sight, above her, a pigeon walked on the bricks, sobbing faintly. Below. A man

waits. for a bus, that will never come. A dog has just smelled something, and is looking up, in my dirc ction. I try to walk quietly.

Everything is gone. They even changed the lamp posts. They pried up the trolley-grooves. Isn't it enough that you've survived. Don't ask any questions. Maybe they've only missed you by mistake. Maybe you weren't home when they went through your building. It doesn't matter what direction I go in. I always wake up further away from home.

No sense to grieve over no time to write. Because either all is well and perfect (Divine) hence this non-writing is utterly insignificant, or else all is completely horrible (mortality) hence this non-writing is utterly insignificant.

This is a song of blackbrds, how they are beautiful. This is about how they sing. They sing so fine. This is about how they hop. They hop in trees, and on a house peak, lovely the way.

I like my poems. But I'm an idiot maybe. Anyway, I'm happy someone (me) wrote poems that an idiot (me) can enjoy.

And also we *are* literally, in relation to conceivable intelligence, idiots. Finite is infinitely limited relative possibility. So the new, the limited I *do* praise.

(On the sea at night and moon) Oh, such beauty I am allowed to behold. Conversation overheard: "bark bark." "Tania, get over here you bad dog." "woof. woof wa-woof-woof."

While reading in the newpaper I saw and read an article about the suffering of a child and an animal. I began to cry. I went into the other room, which was darker, and lay down on the floor and covered my face and continued to cry. After a while, I prayed that the child and the animal should be perfectly all right and happy, and that the newspaper should be incorrect.

I just put this down an hour later this way — because it was clear to me when I was crying how stupidly callous and pompous most writing is. It is better to cry and pray.

I want to write to comfort someone. But, but, I don't have to be disturbed that my words aren't comforting. Comforting is there. They are comforted. My words are nothing, one way or the other, merely the mysterious task I appear to be assigned. They are comforted without me. By heaven. Heaven is here even now too, for them and for me. I pretend that my words can comfort them. They pretend that they are in need of comforting. My darlings, my darlings.

I guess it is so, that I still cannot make sense of

my feelings. Once the strangeness seemed this: that my sorrow seemed to be cause of the poems I thought beautiful, though sorrow was pain, and I wished no pain for myself or anyone. Now it is this: that I feel a presence of holiness around me when I am capable of loving-pity-sorrow for other beings, yet heaven *is*, and sorrow makes no sense, and yet it is this pretense of their vulnerability, that makes me understand how I love-pity-am am joined by invisible air-nerves to all beings.

Strange masquerade. We pass, and kiss with lies. This mask you kiss with paper lips. We angels dress like children in painted tears. You cry so I can know how much I love you.

I cannot pray to kill the evil ones, because, they do not exist. So I pray for these delusions to vanish. Twould be sin to make them real merely to soothe my anger by letting me kill them. Let them vanish, and my anger too.

Musical one, let us play little games. Though even in ours we repeat the betrayals of humanity. Touch, sing, recapitulate primitive tricklings of springtime. It is time making me strange. I don't know what happened. I was me, and am still, though before I was little I was nothing, and am something remembering something, water pouring into water pouring, where was I, it was night,

I was little, the lights made venetian fans, as cars blew past, I waited for my parents, a bird was sleeping, I was reflected in tables and jars, vases and mirrors, I wept in my pillow, I studied the clocks, oh mornng, oh morning, I'll run in the zoo for ever and ever, the gazing animals are silent angels, someday they'll tell us, I'll run till they do.

2

People eat because they are afraid to get too light. They might float away. You should see them in the evening, drifting above their homes with puzzled expressions. I am working on a dictionary for every occasion. What is holding back discovery is the lack of sufficient noises. The things are waiting to be discovered but we do not have enough words. I am preparing a list of special noises. Some are sure to be the name of unknown things.

I have discussions with someone in a garden. This is a woman. I can wear no clothes. Nothing swings between her legs. I might get caught in her, like the drain of a bath tub. Thou shalt not wear clothes. I wear them, to prevent the cold, and the look of others, who want to eat my fruits,

to know me. Knowledge is the same as evening. We always fucked at midnight. One wet surface makes another thrust. I wear a heavy coat. That is my sin.

I tried. I tried. I drove 90 miles an hour across the city. I did push ups for fifteen minutes. Anything to prevent the words. Just a few I'll say.

I jumped out of the plane but the bad man made holes in my parachute, and I had to fly. I did it by holding my arms close to my body. Like this. They made grooves. The birds looked at me slightly, as they flew all around me. Help. No more people. People are bad for me. Oh how they suffer (when they aren't laughing at me) they walk away, and there are holes in their coat, and they think I made the holes. I write them all letters, saying "I did not make your holes." It's no use. I will have to change my name, and my body. I will have to go into the closet. I will have to go to the movies every night this week.

And when the day is over, then there's the beautiful night, to sleep in, and dreams. Not only oceans, but cars. Is there something sinful, about striped shirts? And music, from a light above the shift while speed multiplies the night, and lights appear to pass, containing life, and I like, to be coated and seated still, although my foot is mov-

ing us, by pressing in the darkness. I have a mustache, and I do not perfectly understand the universe.

The poetry books fell into the water. I read them in my sleep. I ride the train. The doors open, and children are born, and the newspaper has pictures of the sun underground. My clock got a hardon in heaven.

I'm an asshole. Kiss me. Kiss me. I am wily with my feet. I do evil. with my shoe. Oh dear, oh dearie. Did I say so, Did I say so die die die. Run. I am the only copy. Yet I am poor. I am a poor risk. I am a poor excuse for a human. I am poor old boy. I am a sinner. I said words, that made harms. A human was harmed, by my word. I said, "you are stupid." Now I wish I were hidden in the mud. Let them put the dinner on me. Let them rub it in. Let them put butter on my body. I'm ready. Eat me. I didn't know what I was doing. It wasn't me. I'm not here. I'm so stupid. You wouldn't believe me would you. "Are you ready to die?" (No). "Are you ready to forget? forget everything?" (No). oh Oh OH. I may have to cause less pain, by fighting asleep to end all sleep. I may have to slap myself hard. Look at that. A person lives in a pot. I want to. Protect me. My ass said it. Not me. It was my ass. My ass.

My ass has a silly grin. I better show them my ass. They will pity me.

A book with no words may cost, for the paper all white, to be made by one who buys. Why do one buy it with the words in already? I can do no thing. For as once each did mean a sexual replica. Now each I do resembles a pain. Face is a page by which we speak, by means of cartoon we call smile or frown.

On top of the house is a place to walk. In the pool woman waited with breasts, and with heavy wet black bathing suit, under which she was. I had taken off my clothes for the swimming test. I didn't have my trunks so I went in that way. She didn't speak to me but she smiled. Can we do it here I wanted to know. I nestled and rubbed up to her in the corner. Because of the water it didn't seem I was smaller than her. I wanted to do it now but she smiled. I felt warm and wet and prodding where I touched her with my penis.

Come, let your head assume this greasy hat. There is a word here, but she is laughing. Turn around, turn around, see the other side. There were buildings there too. And someone put butter on the windows. The man came with his long stick, and put each wicked pole on. And old fellow rocked back and forth sucking on a bottle.

"My good sir, could you tell me." But I saw he had lost his face years ago. A small woman was licking him like an envelope. "There is a message I must send," she explained. The vision a man has is a clear thing. One could be sleeping and a mother could comment on a cookie. How good it tastes, you think, but I am getting fat. And when you awake you hobble downstairs to eat a cookie. Or you might see a sun on tv in your sleep. Ah, this is odd, because it is above too at this moment. And sense of transmission is so strong it makes you gap. You wake up suddenly, but the thought you could not understand in your dream, you can not understand awake either.

That cold tea with the leaves in it, makes me talk like tree or stone.

"The meaning of one language is to strip every meaning away but one, and onto hold your lists. The other language is filled with the world at each word. I recommend the former when attempting to ward off 'inspired' murders. I recommend the latter when attempting to discover that heaven is here someplace. Though even your former warding will depend upon the increased vision — enabling them to see that no creature should be harmed. And if they are not enabled,

no doubt you will have to murder them, because of your inspiration."

When you sneeze are you cramped thereafter in your side? Speak no blighted way. This water is given to you. "All of it, rabbi?" Yes. Look closely at this puddle. Isn't it wet? The water comes calmly closer. It is from the Atlantic. And I am in my house. A man arises in dignity when he wears shoes. And if he has a tie, how mighty he is. And, yea, if he has a hat upon his head, none can belittle him.

I sneeze from the cleanliness of my hand. It has soap! To the doodle man gives his attention, nor any other. For by accident he makes a mighty scheme, and does not fail to add minute details. All work is intended to lull the work-portion, so the doodle can continue. However, I say unto you, chairs too are allright in their part. To sit makes a man feel his body some thing to be arranged, while his head gets on with the work. Oh, we forgive the philosophers for loving chairs.

1. Not wishing to tell lies, I have stopped speaking. 2. Not wishing to be mistaken, I have stopped thinking. 3. Not wishing to do evil, I remain in my room.

So that they shall permit me to remain near the sea, where I can look at it, and at the birds, I am

obliged to earn the rare green paper, and so I drive each morning to a cold room, within an antique building, where I can sit for an hour behind a lectern, and tell jokes to children.

A piece of wood wanted to learn chess. Near the end of the game it occurred to this wood it didn't know what was going on.

On your shelf five thousand mouths. You shut the cover on a mouth and put it away. You sit at your desk to write. But you are aware of five thousand mouths rubbing, against the wrappers.

While I think, or rather, do the thing with words, outside, birds fly. I can talk to no human. I can talk to no bird. I cannot talk to myself. My voice is different, or my ears. I do the thing with words.

Their reality does not debate mine. They attack it by words and pictures so hideous that my words and pictures vomit and stop. They do not debate mine. Merely by opening their mouths and revealing themselves to be so horrible they embarass my sweet words.

The newspaper's lies begin on the obituary page.

And if I lay, and seeing the sky move, thought I moved, ah and recalled, I *do*. Years late, I come to live by sea. If I live solitary, then let it be with

night and day and sea. Even human work is glinted angled touched by some ever hovering thing. I do not know how to say it, so, I sing, silently, so I dance, lying on the floor.

Some figures must speak, and dance so slowly. I saw so in the clouds, passing, and asking me for words. This moment, often, often, each thing so intensely and suddenly what it is. You asked, is it only a pleasure, like the lost have? But it whispers.

Each color is special. It means color.

Bird knows raga. Seem him peck and look at snow. Children of gentle parents are gentle. See how they lift the sled, that is good. See how they drop the sled. They know how to laugh like raga. Their dog knows too.

Birds are like me. Birds walk around. Sit on rocks. Look around. Hop into water. Move slowly. Hop out. Birds are beautiful. They are angels. I know. They fly. I see them fly.

"What can you say in your own defense!"

"Only this. I am very good at thinking beautiful thoughts. I am an expert at looking at the sky. I know how to fall in love with birds and doggies."

They said to me, "how do you dare turn down this fine steady well-paying job as murderer

which we are offering you? You have no idea what you are going to do instead!"

"But at least I won't be a murderer."

"You could get a job as a bird," she said.

"The other birds would laugh at me. When they saw me running along the beach flapping my hands."

"Maybe the other birds would take care of you. They might bring you seaweed to eat."

"Yes. They might."

Man's great mistake is in seeing the difference between good and evil as equivalent to the difference between man and beast. But in fact the difference between good and evil is equivalent to the difference between herbivorous and carnivorous beast.

Man is not created a little below the angels and a little above the beast. Man in his omnivorous state is a little above the carnivorous beasts and a lot below the herbivorous beasts. Man, however, by spiritual growth, can attain a herbivorous state.

The revised declaration must read: All animals are created equal. Meaning one cannot distinguish the infinities of joy and pain felt by one being from the infinities of joy and pain felt by another.

How do I dare make myself pure? What can a pure one do here but cry? Already the beauty of the animals makes him fear for them. A pure cry he has become. He has become the witness of all that passes, all that suffers.

Unable to fight back, he has forgotten how to rage and hurl stones. He has forgotten how to do everything except weep.

Oily and painful night. I want to. I want to. I want to sit on a couch with a heavy mirror above me, and a parakeet on the mirror, and when the noise goes by outside, the pattern of the venetian blind fans over ceiling and the walls. Soon my parents will come home.

Instead of a mouth I have a large round pain. I think there are some teeth in my pain.

They expect a man with a large round pain to talk about the wisdom.

Why can't you learn? Why can't you learn? How many times do you have to be ill to learn that merely being healthy is beautiful, is ecstasy!

Every morning the angels hop around in front of my house. They clear their wings, and ride the sunlight.

I think they come here to laugh at me in their invisible angel way. They know I love to look at them. And perhaps they think I'm funny as I

pace about my room thinking foolish things about myself.

The ducks are quacking to me.

Man is totally dependent. His powers, merely one more thing created from outside himself. It is not merely that the universe he understands so slightly, was created outside of himself; but his very power to understand was created outside of himself.

Men have developed some peculiar ideas about religion. They know that modern science has proved that when you put a flame under a pot of water, then this water will boil, and they believe that this proves there is no God.

Subscribe. Subscribe. So you can believe the latest lies.

How many years of breathing on some ocean island would it take to clear all their poisons from my lungs.

Courage to find another world. My own world —wouldn't it seem empty?

And theirs is so complete — from the complicated jumble of lies on top, that justifies the whole, down to the pattern on the toiletpaper, and the exact nauseating expression on the faces of generals and television game show emcees.

I don't want to waste myself in hate and fear and grief.

I want to find some far-off kind of joy, that has nothing to do with their lies, their killing, their selfishness.

And (it seems) you see poet after poet mumbling and stumbling away to his doom, later praised irrelevantly, or dismissed irrelevantly. He was running around in circles, flapping his arms, trying to get to heaven by making birdnoises.

These squeeks come from heaven. That's all you know, and all you need to know.

Scene: Two characters, sitting silent.

Every now and then One begins to whine, staring straight ahead.

After awhile Two comes closer and pets One and One stops whining.

After awhile Two stops petting.

One sits silently staring straight ahead.

After awhile One begins to whine again.

In which of the worlds do I want to make sense? In the world which presupposes death? In the world which presupposes eternity?

Scene: Same actor does baby to maturity to old man, by simply changing external costume, which doesn't disguise him. Diaper for child. Beard for another age. For adolescence maybe a big phallus.

Old age maybe a big limp phallus.

And this is odd, how he is one and many. How the way he says changes yet he is saying. How he looks changes yet he is looking at how he looks different and he knows it is *he* who looks different.

One adopts human speech, slyly, to fool the humans? Are the others human? In a mirror I notice how much of me is gone. Yet perhaps the memories are there, only waiting till I am strong enough to summon them.

On the "realistic" level between two people is lies. But in our parallel lies to each other we realize our oneness.

In paradise would all possible beautiful paintings exist already? Wouldn't there be more for the angels to paint for the first time?

Commentary: *Kinds* of "imperfection." Not suffering, but still change.

Sometimes I ask, should a pure man have a body such as mine? Or should he be pure sphere, from which emanates perfectly even light, he himself perceiving uniformly all around himself all the time.

They use their reason to analyze the latest disasters. But the point is, the point is, that these disasters have *happened*, not that these disasters

have some causes which can be discovered by the use of reason.

When they eat you they give you another name, (venison).

"I ponder over nuances of ethical and sensitive behavior. And all around me, something which I try not to see, people are positively transforming themselves into demons. They are laughing with glee. They are staging competitions to see which one can outdo the others in cruelty. They are grinning and painting their faces with blood. And I am pacing about my room trying to decide if I should tell people that they should not desire greatness because greatness may be tinged with a measure of evil arrogance."

Only a roar instinct. Crowds, for example — having nothing to do with any desire for causing harm. It is simply accidental that the puppets they kill are alive.

Human emotion, instinct, is not at fault in human evil. Human evil results from the improper association of object with emotion.

War could have been averted if only someone had taught the president how to masturbate.

They dream with each other's bodies. Thus they kill. They need the flesh of others to dream with. Thus they kill.

Although now their cap pistols really kill people, the generals are still playing the same game they played when they were five.

"The pieces come out of the chair, see, like this."

Why the evil ones afflict me. Though I know suffering stems from non-human events ultimately.

1. Because my faith in paradise immortality being reality is related to sense of yes couldn't be otherwise since universal energy is goodness. (P.S. must intuit in myself this goodness. Which I do. My feeling for, feeling with animals). 2. Would horrify me to admit evil people are real. Because what would I do with them in paradise? (Perhaps they could spend eternity in the movies).

Scene: Greek chorus is many people in a bag, tossing and grunting.

It occurred to him he might live forever if only he stopped doing things in the world. If he could leave definite evidence of existing, then to go on existing forever wouldn't spoil the plan of their world. If only it doesn't show up in the records. I could stay in the closet during the day, and come out at night. Just take a little out of the refrigerator. No one might notice.

Scene: Two people on stage looking into space. One makes a noise. No comment from the other.

"I made a noise! I made a noise!" The other says, "It was a good noise." The first one smiles happily. They stare into space again.

One goes out of the "real" (i.e. unreal) world at two ends, the high and the low.

When I go out high of course I want to stay there.

But when I go out low? Ah, but the same, the same. When I am in a mad low. When I am oddly unconnected with all "real" (i.e. unreal) pursuits . . . and in depression apparently . . . Why, why, don't I follow the advice in all Advice to Mentally Mad books? (i.e. breath deeply, take a run, read a newspaper, fuck). Because of strange sense I have, there is something here, there is something here. There is something in this low, this disconnection which is trying to teach me something.

Because I have . . . now I think of it . . . then passed out of the world in a low, as sometimes I do in a high.

And when I deny myself the high pass out, because of some compulsion to my "real" (i.e. unreal) jobs, then secretly my psyche makes me take the low pass out, and wobble in disconnection, strangely brooding upon nothing I could point to.

I don't think we should talk to those fellows. Their plague spreads by words.

I have fallen in love with a book cover. But I know it will never marry me. We came from different families. Too different. Hers is paper. Mine is human.

Popular movies began as superficial imitations of human behavior. But now humans have begun to imitate popular movies, which posthumously have become deadly accurate depictions of superficial human behavior.

"I do so much want to write realistic novels. It's just that I don't believe in reality."

"Someone invented little ways to run around."

And if a man sin earlier, should he say, ah my life was lost then, and I am of no further good.

For I have not learned to forgive other people (though I do forget my crimes).

Disappearing. I can't go back to my childhood neighborhood. It vanished. Only the movies of my childhood never change. The glossy lies I knew were lies remain utterly unchanged by time, while all that was true, all my life, disappeared.

Two ways. I can open someone else's book and see if he has the answer. (But this unlikely because I would have heard). Or I can sit down at

typewriter and let words arrive on the page, and see if I have the answer only haven't noticed yet. (But this unlikely because I would have noticed).

All have a theory why I must be dead. They have guns to verify it. I see they do not know, because the answer to their maze is death.

All my books stand in coats of flame. They are stupid, made of glue and ink. Behind each flame the face of writer sticks his tongue at me, perhaps to kiss me, perhaps to taste the lovely air.

I had to talk through this language. Only some important words were missing. Like sky. Like animal. Like

Sea, so silent, so silent, why raise a human voice.

I write because I cannot bear to read again what I have written. (It would be defiled). I write so I might have something new to read for the moment that I am writing it.

A man's words happen when something else happens. The words remain. Something else vanishes. When he looks at the words later something happens. If you ask what, more words will happen.

I am a pervert! I keep having this uncontrollable desire to be human!

The human has sides to stand on. Yet he is blown down by inspiration. The wind returns to

the sky. And even the sky is imaginary. (None of this is true). Yet we continue to make squares. Because this is what we do best. It is not so beautiful as the bird's. But we are happy to be square-makers for a time.

Scene: Solemn group for burial at sea. "And so he do not stink up the boat we put him in the sea and the fishes gonna eat him."

Ah-haaaaa. Said in high sightype voice but smiling.

Moment. "This is where I came in." Look up a moment. Then return. Or just start again?

"Moderation!" — "But you're insane." "I'm moderately insane."

What you say has 99 meanings and all of them are wrong. Some day you will know which was right. Then all will be right. This is wrong.

"Doctor, tell me, are we real? I have drawn faces so long, I'm not sure. I feel like a painting. I cannot take my lips seriously. My nose. My hair. I don't believe it."

When I sit down, chair fall apart. I promise to run, and cackle a lot.

Little ones cried in little beds. "Wheel them into the sun," I cried out as they disappeared.

I play a certain record again and again, hoping it will bore me some day.

rrreality is the store where you can only buy one. On the wall you can hang many pictures. But the world only hangs you once. Don't touch the world. It will electrocute you. Do you think there are prostitutes in paradise? At the store I bought myself in bottles. I taste so good.

I am the first man to take a bath on top of Mount Everest. The dead men were doing arithmetic. "2 plus 2 equals 4. I died for math," he said.

"Hurry, the bed is leaving." I only know one story. "Once upon a time there was a little boy, and he lived happily ever after." I meet 70 people a week. They are illusions. I am a little boy. My family takes me to Bronx Zoo, because I am an animal. Rainbows trickle in the oily gutter. I lie down across the Bronx. The clouds are blowing through me.

The forest said to me, "I want to entertain you." I sat down on a rock to cry. The rock kissed me. I have to think. I have to think. Why am I still so pink and small? Everyone else got big and disappeared. There's something here. I don't know what. I mustn't leave this place. My parents are so young. My father is taking pictures, as my mother paints the piano. My grandmother is making sure her kitchen is covered

with newspapers. My grandfather is making three funny faces at me. It is abnormal to reach my age and still have feelings. I know I am sick. I know I should be replaced with a machine. I wheel my aunt into the kitchen and we play doctor.

What is the use of dressing up and going outside? Weeping is my work, and I can do it here. A young horse should appear at my window, and begin to sing.

They didn't teach me how to eat. I moved my mouth, and listened to the voices. Oh I want to hear a blessed voice. I want to hear a voice in heaven. I saw my face in the soup. Is this a way to live? A man made little paper wings and jumped off the Eiffel Tower, and the Eiffel Tower died.

Come with me. I will show you people sharing toilets. I will show you old people taking baths together. My body is from the sun that kisses it.

In heaven they are singing and taking off their clothes. They never explain anything to me.

H: (attempting to lecture) "ahmmmm . . . hmmm . . . " (holds up the book) "this is the book . . . . hmmm . . . " (Student raises hand. H points to student who speaks) : "Teacher, I don't like reading books by dead men." H: "Dead? He

isn't dead." (A tall student gets up and walks out of the room). Students: "It says he's dead." H: "I just saw him the other day." (2 other students get up and walk out). I have a secret way of walking.

Old man: "Hello" (sticks out hand to shake.) "I am a poor old man. I work real hard. Now I get old. I die soon. How do you do?" H: "Hee hee hee." Dwarf: "Give him the newspaper." H: "Who're you trying to kid? He's no older than I am." Elegant man: "Pardon me, but I know that man. He is my wife." H: (to dwarf) "See!" (to old man) "Now, Sally, you go home with hubby now. You better sleep it off." Old man: (suddenly clutching H) "Mommy! Mommy!" (H pushing him gently) "Mommy! I'm cold. I'm cold."

I have so many pens in my pocket. Hi yi yi. Listen, where is this? I just got out. Points to a book: "Green." Takes down the book: "Clean and fresh" smiling. Ha ha ha I didn't know there were other people. Where are you human? Talk to me. Talk to me. I am floating for a while, to look for something near the light upspace of pool, but I want to be more walking with you later.

See the world. See the nice worldie.

I like the way I look. Time oh time, I better

take a few thousand photographs of myself to remember.

Their cities are beautiful. They say it's poisoning them. But around every corner the way buildings are magic dismal colors and the wind is weighty and invisible can make you tiptoe in slow motion on the sidewalk.

Years ago something else seemed real. I don't remember how I did it.

I can act like the others. I can act so so so correctly. But I began to feel carsick, as if I were riding, someplace, for oh so long, and oh I wished I could open a window, and breathe breathe breathe.

What are the people doing? They must have another clue.

I suppose it's possible to live as if there weren't a QUESTION.

Is it wrong to live a protected life? I am a Princess! "So why are there all the bad people? Why don't they just line up — I'll give them autographs."

Scene: Old man, marching — calling out to himself: "left, right, left, right."

"You know why they called it blerg?" "No. Why?" "Cause that was it's name. It liked to be called blerg."

The magic birds are walking.

And as I look through the volumes in which the past leaders of the world have set down their ideas, I say to myself "thank God we don't have to take these bastards seriously anymore!"

This urge to make big things, no sin of pride (i.e. "better than"). Suddenly mighty beauty of animal world I face and oh what can I do, what can I do, seeing you so beautiful world, I want to do, I want to do, this word is my do! this words is my made for you, how heaven continually comes new! Know it, from you it grows too. So sing, out of all *more* springs. Music make you dance. World make you word.

Ivy droopy brown and dry wouldn't think they'd live again. But a voice told me they sleep brown. I know green spring up again.

I made this color blue, to save you.

I will talk to bird. Some day I do be edified. Bird eat me. Is that the word? Nude knew new U doubles you?

As an exercise: Try to say something that *doesn't* have nine levels of meaning.

An animal licked me. This was caused by my beauty, I mean my lovely, I mean I licked the doggy first.

You know it's funny when you see all the

people walking down the street and then you see a doggie walking down the street.

Nobody thinks it's funny. But I know how funny it is.

"Do you want some coffee?" "No, I want my dreams to come true." He was a lizard suddenly. Very small. (He shouldn't have answered).

She seem him pour himself a drink. "I know what happens after this. He starts laughing, and then he goes to sleep."

There's no point writing. The animals I love do not read. ?

"Why devise words for the music that is all around?"

The sky gets dark. The world gets to disappear. You were a child. Your aunts and uncles had books on their shelves. You rode home with your parents. Pieces of time on the river. It was night. It made you think. Now you are on the other side of the story.

Myself in the kitchen a million years ago, snow falling on the garbage cans outside.

Zaboola!

Zlabba!

I wear a tie to feel wise.

A bird walking carefully in the sun.

He decided he would spend more time in the future.

The beautiful bird is waiting for me, to spread my ducky feet and jump into the sea.

And I don't go outside to see the birds, because I am afraid it would teach them to like humans. But they must fear humans, to protect themselves. So I stay inside, and think of how beautiful my birds are.

Treading ether, your head pops up, someplace else. You look around. "Hello! Hellllooo!" It is morning, and the scratches are at it. Faraway a boy is peeing on some crackers. It's the long-lost me. Ah, me, forget me not. I haven't sold out. Though I wear the grey of elders. Though I wear their lines, and mimic their crippled gait. It's still me, me. Though their evil druggists have hidden my body. Locked me in the hospital, and taken my body away. Given me this hospital skin to wear. Mommy and daddy and me are paddling around in the sea. Some call me crazy. I say they're too lazy to make the sea come true.

"Mystery of was. We pretend Is was. But Was is."

It's hard not to dance. There must be a good reason.

I am afraid to look at the sea. It is so beautiful. I might spend all of my time muttering.

My crazy ones who live in the wind are making cries, letting the wind throw them, and sliding back.

Beautiful music means you will be saved. That must be why I'm singing all the time.

"Cocca-ba-hoc?"

"Pazootch!"

3

A man and smile, witn rod of white, to light the starry, sky at night. "That man am I. With word but small, I make from nothing, all."

Mist so fine. Tree of light. Pane of ice. Very nice. Think I'll dance. Think I'll fly. Think I'll never ever die.

Man aweeping in the night, all that's wrong will soon be right. The milky way are tiny sperm in another body. I perceive the night is a great light.

Years ago I was a boy. I am so today. In that house, I smelled the grass. On my arms the nice ants creep. To feel them creep it was a treat. Outside a tree was named for me. On the porch, we sat and saw, the cars go by. I was a boy. I think of then. I think of then. All things come,

to those who wait. I will wait now, till I am then.

Thus bus shunts by on time, with none inside. The snow is so white, with none in sight. The trees are so distant and delicate, with no secret.

grey and white gull, stands silent, at spilling edge of grey and white sea. I don't know how to talk to people, their eyes lit by tv screen, and their ears tingling with jingles. The gull isn't on their planet, nor the sea, nor me.

My coughing wakes me, and I shuffle out. Gull turning, seeing me, fleeing, all in one motion. My sickness is a sin, against this endlessness of mist. One glob of molten light ignites the mist, and now the waters slump toward me, in troughs of pain and swells of shadow. At dawn the gulls, sit upon the bouys, or fly with outstretched whiteness, above themselves across the deep. By mist concealed, there is no verge, tween sea and air, except a pain when looking up, I know makes up the air, and place of sun. I have never lived so close to life of bird. Water is the softer ground, which moves you, when your feet are underneath. Dry is harder. There no one can move, unless he waddle. Bird, your noise is music. Do you talk? It's music. This way may my needs, be turned to music, by a teaching bird! Oh now the

souls fly past me in their world, their high child squeels, motionless bodies on quick calm wings, make minutest dips and upskips, where a breeze meets breeze, I think, for to their feeling wings, the air is visible. Gulls, gulls, plainting, calling and scaling, close by me flying, I see suddenly, slung from godly wings, white sojourning body.

Over the darker grey of the water, against the lighter grey of the sky, the undamaged gulls continue to cry, for me to all in one motion turn, and see the world and flee, with grey wings carrying me, cry of baby in body of bird, above the changing changeless sea.

4

And shall my head see wonders? This he asked, as birds walked round him, speaking.

I will go, I will lift my feet and go, and go he did, with wind and stars clinging to his feet.

How shall a man speak lovely, unless he live with doggies, unless he live with wind about him, sea before him, land below? And if he wants to fly, the air will tell him how. And if he wants to speak the truth, the words will show him.

See how a bird shakes the wind out of its feathers. Animals will teach you, will teach you, will teach you what to teach, teach humans animals

are teachers. Study no lingo. It is yours, upon the sun, rebeaming from your page. Men make a maddened order, each sits on bricks, casting sand upon the other, and they sing: sit with me, sit with me, and throw sand at the others.

I have no ordinary head. It is the wind, like everybody else. We run. The world cranks under us. We speak. Airmouth sucks out our words. I know a dog.

Tell me, where is future gone. Is it dreamy like I think? The thought of man is not a way, it is the place that preludes it. They sit explaining things in circles. I am wise baby. I weep amid my books; and cry out a joying syllable, meaning ALL IS WELL.

Darling, it took so long for me to fall in love with you. I'm falling. The air is full of distance and I kiss it all. It took so long to fall in love with life. Oh years, oh years, I didn't know how to love you, life, your sky, your air, your evenings, winds and noises. I wasted hours complaining while you waited for me, naked, smiling, seeing me pout and smash my toys. No more. Now let me know speed, and slowness. Daylight delights, and night-time too. Being kissed, kissing also. Being enchanted, and enchanting you with noises.

I called it poetry but it's ecstasy you've given me and I love. It's no vanity I chase forever suddenly I know. Your name is ecstasy. For some reason there are words. Oh stay with me, joy, oh ecstasy, now I know your name. Stay with me always.

Sea inthrashes penumbral blows. Sections of grey heaviness smash, and bellow backwards, or explode, and I pace inside my painted room like a pendulum of doom in a silly tale. It *is* silly to put fantasies in code and brood on fate you make by believing it. Forget! Embrace the water! See that it is good. It will tell you happy stories of humanhood.

I would not have it grey if it hurts a bird. Looking out my window at the sea, I say, bird if you wish it blue now and bright, may it be so. I will not be inspired by weather that afflicts you.

A man came into my office in the circus. The door shut, and shut out the sound of the calliope and clowns and children. "What is it," I said, looking up from my papers. "I am here to tell you that the circus does not exist," he replied.

"Neither do I" he added, guessing my reply. "I am you too," he said, and vanished. And my room vanished too, and my papers. I had a sensa-

tion of air moving around me, that's all. "And did I make it all," I wondered.

"Was I an angel of some sort?"

"Come back, world! Come back, illusion," I cried. "I will treat you better next time. I promise to believe in you."

And then I was at my desk again. And heard the circus outside, and vowed to give everyone a raise, and I rushed out suddenly and kissed an elephant.

But I am too small to make an all. And my dreams harm me in sleep sometimes. The world does too, but more. And the humming strong of my typewriter sounds like Om intermittently. I see signs. But I am many years stupid. The past tense is evil. I don't believe it. I'm not sure. Is becoming past dying. My memory of being child is small. My past years, even last, is but partly represented in this room, of me and seaside outside. The movies are always new. The t.v. replays the dreams that never die, though the dreamer vanishes (in mysterious wrinkles, which are a family tradition). The children screech outside. Little do they know that they are children. The hopping dog knows something, but he's not telling. The men are building a canoe. Making the world. And made by it. Making noise.

Hearing news. The normal music is a thwacka thwacka. This dying feeling is an oddity. It isn't much real. Signifies lapse. But if you walk from book how can you complete the script. Do not leave. The spirit may dictate. I write down words I do not understand. Nor might any possible meaning save me? I mean I may be looking in the wrong direction. Or it may not be a direction at all. In my room talking to myself, pausing to type the thing down, and then frantic to get on with talking to myself. Outside on every street corner people are stopping and imparting useful information to each other about the weather. Ah, dear people, I know you are the wind like me.

So beautiful. Tis like a movie. Waves exposed by light explode all night beneath my window and I rock and think, and of the noise explain a new noise.

The mind is fetched away. It wants to go, it wants to know something useful, like the way to heaven. The window reveals a world so beautiful it must know something useful. But if you go, you may change, forever, and would you remember earth, child, and the transient colors of your nightly lookingplace, the sky, and birds, your brothers?

I will not talk the way they talk, it is a death-talk.

We place on music in a disc, the uneven grooves displace the air, signifying glitter on the skin, and vague spots of faces, who kissed. I DON'T WANT TO DIE. Scream it, maybe an angel will hear.

None, none know my words. And do I, and do I? that rock me, and talk, and talk out, and talk out. I walk out, I walk out, and speak out my words, and hope that they mean something good, something good. For love of you all, creatures quick, creatures quick, I make you this noise, this noise, this noise.

Dear friend, I am a prisoner of music. They took away my country. Evil musicians guard me. They let me sit on the terrace. They play an accordion to make me a baby. They merely turn a record to see me sit like a cowboy again. How can I face my people? I write this letter knowing you will not receive it, knowing you will not understand it if you do. (They will change the words). I told you I would expel the enemy. I told you I would fix the clocks. The old musician sits across the table dealing cards. He sings I am a baby, and I cry.

Night. little words have colors. they mutate,

when a drop ate, them. see, plip. heh, another one. red dim disc. green O. follow, the fleet blear smears. I'm bird a bit. I sit in box, and smooth down distant light. it has a name and a noise, and a soft speed. rain tells news. friends are sad. a far off I am light. I know this tube will turn and turn, and men will run with heaven in a bag. Inside a green book a mouse wakes up, and bellows, so all the buildings become dust and blow away, leaving us standing in the air, where we begin to dance to the words of the mouse. Things in the world, emit music. The language is theirs, they made it out of pieces of time. Speak a new noise, this music something else, else, else.

the wise boy re-moves his clothes, the sky is comfortable, he knows how to use rain, put it on your face, the stars jump. I got new kind wisdom, it makes a hole in time, they went thataway. the noise frequently means a place in some one's dream, here hold my dream won't you, I want to go back, I know the weight, this takes you down, hold these bags. do not answer a fish, this is not your stop. who is the little lie did they wear hats? and how! the mustache frightened me, I was me. is there a future in me, can I ghost forever, ever is even, ever is odd, she is me, she

is not me, why doesn't she speak a merry word, bird has a berry in his beak.

No tea, No tea for me. This was allpeople. No pride to hide in. only monkey, swinging through the me's. I am always here with my ashtray. At this desk I am wise. he is thinking of money, and the record ends. oh I could speak a long time, saying what the light means, and the music. The animals know about God, but they are not allowed to speak. How pleasant to be here. But you always move. It is impossible to stop. This moving keeps spots in front. Then to reach it is like life. Twould be fright, to be moveless. Are the babies new?

Ask a baby the way. The womb was heaven. We're in womb, the sky is near. We are able to talk. and take trips. In Europe I was younger. The slides have me. I am interesting long ago. I am here, long ago I am further away than Europe. The travel agent will sell me no ticket to go back. A duck ate my passport. I saw him fly away. Come back, duck. Tell me something nice. "Quack" said the duck with a meaningful look. I will run. Every? man finds a way to heaven. He is there in a tree. Do you know what, tapping on your desk, In here an ancient civilization has left a magic bean.

Oh bean, speak. Will I ever make sense of this tea, this speeding balance of wet light, and twi-high car tune. oh paper, give my words to me, back with the voice that knew it. I am lost in the movies, and the magic never stops. I will never leave my desk? the night is in my pen. I am a little boy, because he makes everyone alive. oh live, oh live, oh be wings and bear me, oh let me fly, I will write and write, and get so hungry I will rise.

My words don't mean anything I know, they are seeds, if I eat them in a row, they show me heaven. speak and speak, speak more. your friends were sitting on the floor, they had their future in a glass. I said oh, I said oh. I wanted to know how to be a crow. I do not want to be outside all day. The snow might fall on me. And no room to hide in. Comrade, down with time! But you know I can't resist her. She wears a white girlish dress. She is in her black limousine. On every corner is a man who loves her. Her kiss ages them. Each kiss makes them older. They lie down in the greenish light of storewindows. They don't love her. They love the movies. That's why they grow old. Because they wonder what they look like as a child. Don't look! Don't look!

They wonder. Run away, child. This music

will make you old. They wonder what time it is. They wonder what the sad men are. A man who lived forever, might easily become a bird, but he, would he be he, he would have to remember. would some of his parents be birds? (would they be the same parents?) Each man, again and again, discovers beautiful things. he sits in a room. he remembers a movie, he remembers he was young. the universe so long, and he was young.

snow, what do you know. snow, where do go? a clarinet is possible. a bird flies so swiftly. he knows everything. I have a hat. I have arms. How amazing. my life, I should say, each day, each day, had a sun and moon, hello, hello, hello. tell me why do they hide their people in the ground? you should not be ashamed of them just because they are dead. anyway, I see it's a play.

I am merry. I am foreverboy. my books have a boat. each noise kisses me goodnight. all the people, they have a part in it. Circus has many feathers, the pennants are flowing. I stand and my hair grows long, long. You know my hair, the night kisses you. You walk on. You speak to wind and water.

He cried, because he thought he picked a world that wasn't real. I'm hungry. I'm from someplace else. But if I stop talking, what if

there is something I will never say again. I want to walk down. Can I go eat? I can come back tomorrow. If I eat, I can come back, can't I? Writing, in the wrong world is nothing like everything else there, but if you speak to yourself, it may be the way. An answer may appear if you give them your hand to write with. A finger.

Slowly, you grow old enough to grieve. You began to cry when you were a little boy. Now you know why. He realized he hadn't left the funny world, an ant told him. They are constantly uncovering new things in the sky.

Black duck walk about, in sea mud and grey puddle. He sees that it is good. I walk on boards. I walk and look. I am a duck. I came inside, one day, and made New York. But if I pray, but if I pray, sometimes I still know how, to love the way you peck, where the million bits of water flash and fall.

LAST ILLUSIONS

Richard Toney

What am I doing here? What am I doing? The roof leaks water—drip drip drip—onto the rug. When I walk across the rug, as I frequently do — *squish* — it sounds as though I step on someone's heart. Perhaps the roof will soon collapse, or the walls fall in. That might do it. Something has already burst through one of the windows. I don't know what. Nothing is out of place here. Nothing but me. I don't belong here. Anywhere, for that matter. I should like to belong somewhere, or to someone. To a friend, preferably. But an enemy would do. I have neither. I don't even have what came through the window — assuming it was something. It could be that something went through the window. That would be more fitting. But nothing seems to be missing.

I went to a party the other night. About four months ago, actually. I talked a great deal, as I always do at parties, and danced very little. I im-

pressed a great many people with my grasp of things. Several people asked for my address and telephone number. I gave them out freely, as always. But no one has telephoned and no one has come. No one ever has and I can't understand that. I seem to impress everyone so well. I came home from the party with some girl. I don't know why. She wasn't my wife. I'm not married, but there's a woman here who tells everyone she's my wife. Sometimes I pretend to believe her. I've known her for quite some time but only vaguely. I can't recall what happened with the girl, though I can imagine. She was dressed in black. Tall, blond, animal-American, I think. Very young. An artist of some sort, probably. It was that kind of party. I wonder what happened to her. She's not here now.

Today, for the first time in more than twenty years, I have been singing. I had a lovely deep voice as a child — too deep. Teachers and other children laughed at it. I couldn't understand why and their laughter made me ill. Several times in singing class I vomited. Once I even fainted. After that I never sang. I only moved my lips. I loved to sing, but for more than twenty years I kept silent, only moving my lips. Until today. And now it's too late. I can't sing any more.

I should like to go out for a walk, but I'm afraid. They may be looking for me. Once or twice they have found me even though they *weren't* looking for me. That's how efficient they are. If they're looking or me, I don't have a chance. So I may as well go out. But I think the door is locked. I hope the door is locked. If it's not, it might as well not be there. Anyone could walk in. People don't do that, though — walk into strange apartments. Even apartments without doors. But the important thing is that they may want to, if only out of curiosity, even though they don't really want to. Which in a way is even worse than their wanting to. If anyone walked in, I would have someone to talk to. Except that I don't speak French. It's a shame. We might have significant things to say to one another.

The woman across the street, for instance. Eight or ten times a day she comes out onto her balcony, pretending to have important business there. She doesn't fool me. I know she just wants to get a good look at me. Sometimes I go out on my balcony through the hole in the window to oblige her. Then we stand there awhile pretending to do significant things. Occasionally we sneak quick looks at each other. Several dozen or

so meters apart, with a beckoning abyss between, we try to learn about each other. But we never speak. What would we say?

I have tried to say things. And I think occasionally somone may have tried to say something to me. I can't imagine what or why, but I have seen a certain look in an eye, a certain set of a head, a trembling in a lip. I have seen communication conceived — but it is always stillborn. Or perhaps it struggles for a few seconds. Yes, I think so. I have seen communication strangled. A small shop is a good place: the sweet, simple girl selling vegetables and fruit has little in this world and I could give her much. The post office is another: some lovely people work in the Bureaux de Poste in Paris. They are pleasant to one another, but I look for happy endings to their lives and all I see, as if across an endless vacant plain, at the end of time itself, is grief. If I could stay longer — but Paris post offices are terrifying hells: people stand placidly in line like cannon fodder at induction time and I am suddenly aware of the fragile thinness of what separates me from their filthy, smelly bodies. I flee, forgetting even to do whatever it was I came to do. Which is a puzzle, since I don't write letters.

If I cannot go out, I can at least look out.

I can cross the room to either of the two large windows. And I do. To a diminishing panorama of Paris: chimneypots, large studio windows, all the feeble structures stretching away to Panthéon, Notre Dame, Sacré Coeur. I stretch my eyes in compensation and with no greater effort than that I go all the way to the hill of Montmarte and stare back at myself. Beyond myself. To the weird recurrent dream behind me.

How many times a year, for how many years, have I experienced this dream? Incalculable. Impossible. I am in the army. Or, still more farfetched, the marines. Sometimes I have been in for a while; sometimes I am in the process of being inducted. Sometimes it is horrible; sometimes merely ludicrous. I have never been in the army, of course. Much less in the marines. And there is small likelihood of my ever being either place. They don't invite people like me. I might volunteer. But why? All those men together. All those bodies sleeping together, bathing together (if they bathe). Barbarous.

Standing in front of the window and daydreaming on my dream is as bad as dreaming the dream itself and when I come out of it I am sweating and trembling as though I had just experienced the real thing. I need a cigarette; a

drink; something. I make my way unsteadily across the room and sit down. I put my little finger in my ear and withdraw it with some reddish wax under the nail. While cleaning the wax from under one nail with another, I flex my ears. I hear the wax breaking up in one. I try for some and get little. In a few hours it will have moved down to where I can reach it. Meanwhile one thing leads to another: I begin to pick my nose. The proper study of mankind is indeed man: and know thyself. I know myself. I *know* myself — as the Bible puts it. I have known myself. I know for instance that although I am righthanded I pick my nose much better lefty. And as I do I picture someone's watching me. Revolting. Much as I enjoy picking my nose, one of the most sickening sights I have ever seen is someone else picking his nose. If you're going to pick your nose in public you might as well masturbate in public. Which sets me to thinking on the pleasures of masturbation. I consider the possibility but reject it for the time being. I always feel so wasted afterward. Carefully, without hurrying, I exhaust the possibilities within my nose, marveling at the myriad pleasures one's body affords one; thinking that societies, like nations, are false creations. One needs only one-

self. Oneself is the sole necessity. Others are luxuries, dubious luxuries like television, parents, religion, and call-girls. Look in, not out. All lies within. I shall become an inlooker.

Before I can begin to look within I see my eyeglasses on the table. Without hesitation I make a positive move. I pick up the glasses and walk to the kitchen. I bend down, open the door of the cabinet under the sink and open the door of the garbage shoot. Again without hesitation I flip the glasses into the dark, smelly hole. They bounce once, twice . . . a lens shatters, then a slight thud is followed by a silent stench. I close doors and wash my snotty fingers. The water grows warm in time to the slime's slipping pleasantly off. As I dry my hands I notice the empty can. I had beans for lunch. I toss the can on top of my eye-glasses Then I return to my chair with a new awareness: myopia is man's proper condition.

I sit and contemplate my dwindling horizons. I fart and wait expectantly for the warm and pleasant odor to waft upward to my recently renovated nostrils. What perfume. What joy. Nothing should be wasted, so I inhale deeply, trying to draw every atom of it into me. Perhaps if I carry this far enough I can become self sus-

taining. The thought of what such self-sustenance entails makes me gag. My conservatism disappoints me. Perhaps one can carry a thing to far. Even independence.

Even change. I have tried to change things, but things resist change and I am not strong. Let me come right out with it: I am weak. But weakness is not all my fault. Heredity and environment must share the blame. I suppose I inherited fundamental weakness from my father. And my mother was the environment the enhanced it. Something like that. I'm no psychiatrist.

I have heard, however, that my father, after leaving my mother, has gone on living with another woman for twenty years. Imagine. Twenty years! It astounds me. It is something from another world. Not long ago I spent one night with the same woman and *that* was too long.

I never could stand people for long. Not even for as long as they could stand me. Perhaps that is why one day many years ago I disappeared. And I don't think I've ever been found, though I must admit the probability of no one's having bothered to look.

No matter. I have memories. I have myself. And though the memories pale each passing day, myself is always fresh. So why not have myself,

I think, one last time. And so I do with the ringing of the telephone for background music. Slowly, playfully tantalizing, realizing something extra from my ignoring the telephone, which has always terrified me. Ah! My weakness is my strength; my sorrow is my joy. In that way, at least, I am suited to this world.

Afterward, as always, deep depression hurls me further into the heredity-environment syndrome. From which there's no escape. Heredity *cannot* change; environment *will* not change. It is late December, and the temperature is forty-five degrees. If things were as they ought to be, there would be snow. I could love this city under snow. I love any city under snow. Cities (like the telephone) are symbols of man's degradation, destroyers of his illusions. And man cannot, though he thinks he can, live without illusions. Even a true realist. *Especially* a true realist. If we destroy the true illusions we must create false ones. And snow disguises the symbol, separates man momentarily from reality, restores essential illusions, cushions the fall without diminishing the fall's effect. Snow blurs life's harsh lines and makes immortality seem approachable.

But something is wrong here. There is no

snow. And I know there will never be snow again. I know that the legends are dead, victims of what we falsely name reality. In legend, a beast mated with a human and produced a god. But we outgrew such joy. We evolved too far. We recorded too many so-called facts and retained too few illusions. We became what we call realists. Even I. For instance, I know now that I am not a god. I know that I am merely an accidental by-product of a grotesque mismating. The knowledge makes me sad, sadder even than the lack of snow. What, after all, is a human being? One in three billion. One in three billion and becoming less. A realist cannot gamble long against such odds. Not beneath a leaky roof. On a saturated rug. With the walls falling in. *Squish!* — I step on someone's heart.

KATHY-MITSU

Charlotte Cho-lan Lee

"Did you hear, Father?" I cried, gripping his soiled sleeve as he came in from the fields and passed by my bed.

He nodded.

"They won't take *me* away?"

He was silent for a moment as he sat down on a nearby chair to take off his boots. Then he said:

"Mr. Yoshimura told me the news. Don't worry, Mitsu."

'Mitsu' was his favorite nickname for me. He always used it when he sought to calm me. But this time it didn't work. Tears began to roll down my cheeks while he unlaced his boots.

"I was born here!" Hysteria flared up in my voice. "I am one of them. I'm studying hard to be a nurse — just a year more and I'll get my certificate. I am one of them!"

Father took out his handerchief. As he handed it to me he held my hand for a moment in his.

"Come, Mitsu," he smiled. "Stop daydreaming.

Make your bed. We have much to do this morning."

"Come, daughter," my father repeated. Get up now."

He nudged me gently. I rolled over on my side, turning my back to him.

"I don't want to get up." I flung back. "There's nothing to get up for."

I awoke from sleep, hearing my father's voice, momentarily bewildered. We were no longer at our farm. We were at the new internment camp. We had been uprooted by Executive Order N. 9066 that put under military arrest all Japanese aliens and all American born citizens of Japanese descent and transported us into imprisonment in what the government decree blandly called Relocation Camps. As a California born citizen with the racial stigma designated by the decree, I was here among the exiles. The American government was at war with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as well as Imperial Japan, but the decree did not include native-born Caucasian citizens of German or Italian descent nor hold them responsible for the crimes and racist decrees of those governments.

I gathered the blankets closer around me. I

knew father was getting ready for his morning routine of helping newcomers settle down.

"Mitsu," he said, "there is much to do. And I must help repair the roof in the mess hall. It leaked badly in yesterday's rain."

I groaned.

He went on patiently.

"You can help the other women and children clean the bathrooms. You can also go and see Mr. Yoshimura's daughter — her baby is due soon, Mitsu."

"Stop calling me Mitsu! You didn't even fight for what was ours. You sold the farm for practically nothing. And now we have nothing. Nothing!" I screamed at him.

My rage seethed within me. Father stood there silent. He acted just like an Issei, bowed head, accepting sadly all that I shouted at him. Slowly he walked out of the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

"Kathy, is it true that you and your father must move?' Alice asked me as we were walking out of my final morning class.

The corridor was filling up with other students. I was about to answer but was shoved on ahead of her.

"Kathy, wait!" she shouted over the head of Doctor Lewis Malcolm.

She pointed to Room 112 and looked apologetically at Doctor Malcolm as she pushed ahead of him. I leaned against the corridor wall wondering what I would say to Alice. She was my best friend. We planned to work together in the same hospital, hopefully one in San Francisco, after we got our nursing certificates. And we were going to find an apartment together.

"I was so embarrassed about Doctor Malcolm." Alice said breathlessly as she reached me.

She looked at me for a moment, searching my tense face. Her voice took a more cautious tone as she asked again:

"What is going to happen to your Dad and you?"

"Oh," I said hesitantly, "my father is going to be sent away."

Alice's eyes widened.

"Away! Where?"

"I'm not sure. He — no, we are to be sent to a Resettlement Center . . . Somewhere in the midwest," I stammered. It was the first time I had heard my self say 'we'. I turned away from her.

"Oh God! they can't take *you* away! you're my dearest friend," Alice cried.

"We — " I cleared my throat, it seemed constricted. "We received notice that we must report to the Assembly Center to register and sign in by May 31st."

Pearls of moisture were forming on the palms of my hand. I wiped them on my skirt.

"Your father should have become a naturalized citizen. Then this wouldn't —"

"No, Alice, no," I curtly interrupted her. "He was not permitted to. Ever since the Immigration Act of 1924 Japanese immigrants have been prohibited from being eligible for citizenship . . . . Let's go have lunch."

She remained motionless. Then she said:

"My dad thinks there my be spies among your people — but not your dad or you. Anyway, Kathy, you're an American citizen — so you have inalienable rights, guaranteed by the Constitution. They can't take *you* away.

"No, I'm Japanese," I blurted out. "You don't understand. You have blond hair and blue eyes. You belong. Look at me — I have slant eyes."

Alice stared at me, then gently put her arm around my shoulder.

Slowly I pushed the old army blanket down to the foot of the bed and I sat up. I took Alice's

letter from the bureau and re-read it. She said she was taking good care of our sheep dog Melody, but that Melody kept going through the house searching for me. Her letter was very cheery, filled with gossip of friends from school.

A breeze of wind swirled the dust on the floor as the door opened. A stocky woman in her middle thirties walked in.

"Hello, Mitsu, I'm Mr. Yoshimura's daughter. Your father told me —"

"My American name is Kathy," I interrupted her. Then I added: "Is Tommy here?"

I recognized her, although I had not seen her for years. Her father had the neighboring farm. She was away to school when I played with her youngest brother.

Her father's farm had adjoined ours but she had been away to school when I played with her youngest brother, Tommy.

"No, I'm afraid Tommy has been sent to a different kind of camp."

"Different?"

"Tommy was caught passing out pro-Japan propaganda leaflets. He was never political-minded, but he got more and more involved in a dissident student group."

I remained silent.

"Do you mind if I have a glass of water?"

She went over to the table to pour herself a glass of water from the pitcher. She rubbed her stomach as she sat down on the corner of my bed.

My eyes widened.

"Your father told me you are a nurse."

"My father told you wrong. I'm not a nurse —" just a student."

"But you must know a lot about medicine."

She looked searchingly at me.

"I'm not a nurse. Sorry, I can't help you."

I took the broom that was leaning against the bureau and started sweeping the floor.

"We need your help, Mitsu — I mean Kathy."

She got up and put her hand to her stomach again.

"The baby is very active," she smiled.

After she left I opened our only window to air the room and saw her talking to three elderly women. They looked in my direction and I moved away from the window. I glanced around the room. It was as small as my bedroom at home, sparsely furnished, with two army cots, a bureau for belongings, a square table and two chairs. We used our trunk as an extra seat. It was covered with the silk shawl my mother had given me. The rough wooden floors were bare. We had to be

careful for splinters. I opened the bureau and rummaged through the clothing to find a towel. I spotted my toothbrush near the pitcher of water. We had arrived just a week ago and I still could not keep track of where everything was located.

The morning air felt very dry and humid. The temperature must already be 90 degress. Dust billowed behind me as I walked up the street to the community bathrooms. I could hear the voice of Mr. Yoshimura's daughter as I entered.

"The authorities at least built adequate shower and toilet facilities," she said cheerily as she leaned over a basin, cleaning the mirror.

"This may be so, but my husband and I must share our living quarters with two other couples," a young bride murmured. Her voice had no trace of bitterness, but her face looked perplexed.

A grandmother's face nearby flushed.

"They could at least have put up partitions," the young woman softly added.

"The men will build the partition," I heard a grey-haired woman say, comforting the young newlywed.

The young woman tried to look cheered but her smile, fragile enough to begin with, vanished.

"My grandmother is not able to read English

very well and the authorities will not permit Japanese newspapers to be mailed to her," a little pigtailed girl of nine announced.

Her round face and dark almond eyes saddened as she watched her grandmother scrubbing the wooden floors.

"The authorities told my husband we can start our own cooperatives. We can have a barber shop, a canteen, a school and hospital. Whatever we need we can have," Mr. Yoshimura's daughter positively asserted.

She picked up a wet sponge and started washing down the shower stall.

After bathing and showering I came out of the shower cubicle, muttering:

"This is a ghetto, a ghetto."

I expected no one to hear me; the women all seemed intent at their chores. But in passing the grey-haired woman I glimpsed her reprimanding frown. A sleeping infant on the back of one of the kneeling women woke up and wailed. The little girl with pigtails patted the baby's back and calmed him. The mother smiled and continued scrubbing vigorously. The baby dozed back to sleep.

"Kathy, would you please help me clean this shower stall?" Mr. Yoshimura's daughter asked

me as I passed by her. "The baby's moving about so."

She eased herself wearily onto a toilet seat.

"You should lie down. Mitsu will finish your chores," a woman nearby her said.

I did not speak to any of them as I casually strolled out. The moment I stepped out I heard their voices rise an octave. I turned the corner and headed toward the mess hall, located in the middle of the camp.

The mess hall was already crowded with people. It amazed me to see so many Japanese of all ages in one place at one time. Our farm had been close to two other Japanese families, but we only got together socially once a year. The other two families spoke Japanese. My parents had tried to teach me Japanese but gave up when I went to junior high school. All my friends spoke only English. Tommy Yoshimura used to hide with me in the haystack to get away from Japanese lessons.

It was difficult to find Father among the throng in the mess hall. I finally saw him seated alone at a corner table. We said little to each other as we ate our lunch.

"This stew meat is tough," I muttered.

"Yes, but there are fresh vegetables in it," he replied. After a few seconds, he added; "Mitsu,

I've been told by several women that you were unwilling to help Mr. Yoshimura's daughter clean the bathrooms." He pushed his bowl to the middle of the table. Someone sat down next to him and he spoke a few words in Japanese to the man, then turned again to me. "When your mother was alive, she knew what to say to you. You listened to her." Father cleared his throat. He took a handkerchief from his shirt and blew his nose. Mother had died three years ago, a week before we were to have gone to visit relatives in Japan. It would have been my first trip. Mother wanted me to meet her brother and my cousins. But that winter was harsh and the weather cold. She fell ill with pneumonia, complications developed, and she died.

I concentrated on the stew, chewing each spoonful very slowly. Then I said bitterly:

"You should be glad she's not alive to see us here."

"Mitsu, live in the present. Please be a good daughter and—"

I pressed my hands against my ears and heard only muffled sounds. He leaned over the table and gripped my arm firmly. The man at his side said something to him in Japanese.

"I will see you later," said Father. "We have to mend the roof now."

I watched them leave through the rear door.

At an adjacent table two women sat down and spoke excitedly to a grey-haired woman whom I recognized from the community bathroom.

"Mr. Yoshimura's daughter is in labor — having difficulties . . . bleeding."

The two newly arrived women glanced toward me but the grey-haired woman shook her head.

"Get a pan of boiling water ready," she instructed them. "And make sure she's well-covered and kept warm."

I got up to leave and glanced cooly at them. The grey-haired woman averted her eyes. A few moments later the two women hurried past me. I followed them, but kept some distance behind. They turned the corner. I hesitated, then realizing that I was curious, followed on after them. I heard a woman's piercing cries. Mr. Yoshimura's women attending her. They were soothing her and putting cold compresses to her forehead.

The grey-haired woman arrived and took over, calming encouraging the labor spasms. Mr. Yoshimura's daughter's face was twisted with pain and streaming with perspiration. I went over to the kettle to pour more hot water. A young woman shoved me to one side. No one noticed the blanket slip off Mr. Yoshimura's daughter. I went over in-

tending to place it on her again. But before I could, her shoulder slumped and the grey-haired woman held up the newborn baby.

"Our first born!" she proclaimed. "Behold, a beautiful baby girl!"

All the other women giggled with excitement. Mr. Yoshimura's daughter smiled wanly. The grey-haired woman deftly carried the baby to the other room where she began to bathe her; then she wrapped the new-born infant girl and brought her over to the mother. I watched them from the door.

The grey haired woman was removing her rubber gloves. Her eyes met mine.

"It's awful to have a baby born in this prison," I said to her in passing.

She grasped my arm and led me outdoors.

"Hush!" she said sternly. "Mr. Yoshimura's daughter can hear you. This is a joyful moment, no matter where it occurs."

She sounded tired. She hunched her shoulders and sat down on a large wooden crate, probably filled with someone's belongings.

"What is joyful about being born here?" I asked. "Joyful to be born in America — but not to be an American? What rights will she have? What is she? Just another inmate of a prison camp."

The old woman remained silent.

"Look at the guards! And the watch towers! And that high barbed-wire enclosure!"

"You should want to help us," the old woman said, as if she had not heard me.

"I *did* come to help Mr. Yoshimura's daughter."

"Perhaps, but you came late."

I was shaken with anger and mingled emotions as I walked off. Then from afar I heard someone calling my name. A man was waving to me I hastened in his direction.

"What's the matter?" I shouted at him.

He answered me in Japanese but I heard him say my Father's name.

"Has something happened to my father?"

"Yes — fell off roof," he said in his limited English. He pointed in the direction of the mess hall.

I ran towards a large crowd gathered near the entrance and pushed my way through them. Father was lying motionless on one of the dining room tables. An elderly man, was gently placing a rolled up jacket under Father's head.

"Get some ice!" I ordered.

"We have an ice pack inside the jacket," the elderly man tending Father responded.

"Let me see where he has been hurt," I said anxiously.

Father's eyes were closed. His chest quietly heaved. He was alive, his breathing near normal.

"We have checked him — don't touch him!" a young man spoke over my shoulder.

I hid my hands in my skirt pockets.

"His right leg is fractured. Otherwise he's O.K.

"What happened?"

"He slipped off the ladder as he was coming down with tiles on his back."

"Let me help you. I am a—"

The elderly man patted my back.

"We know what to do, too," he assured me.

Father opened his eyes. I touched his face. He tried to smile. He motioned with his eyes that he wanted to say something to me and I leaned over to hear him.

"Mitsu," he whispered. "Do not feel so tangled up inside. Don't feel so tangled..."

His voice faded and he closed his eyes again.

The crowd dispersed.

I moved to the side and sat on the bench. The men gently moved him onto the stretcher.

"We are taking him back to your quarters," the young man said to me.

I nodded.

A wrinkled and withered little old man, with sparse white hair appeared.

"They have first-aid supplies at the office," he said.

"They will give us the supplies, but they will not help us," the young man said harshly.

The older man looked at the young man. He was slim, in his early twenties. I knew him slightly. He had been born in Southern California and was a second year graduate student, studying for his doctorate in sociology. He had to leave the university. The government he had deep faith in sent him away to this concentration camp on the basis of race and race alone. Anger darkened his face.

"They don't have a building for hospital care. They tell us we have to build one."

"No matter, Henry. As long as they give us the supplies, we can manage," Kimura assured him.

"All they did was build these prison barracks."

Mr. Yoshimura, our former farm neighbor whose daughter had just given birth, spoke up.

"We can develop a community, a Japanese community of our own," he said quietly.

Mr. Yoshimura, born in Japan, had came to America to farm. He never had been able to return on a visit to Japan in all his thirty years in America. He was like my father — an Issei.

Mr. Yoshimura added:

"It is best to think of today, not of yesterday."

"I am an American citizen, unlike you Isseis," the young man retorted. "I was born and brought up in America."

The other men said nothing.

"Here I am in a prison camp, interned without even the formality of a charge, to say nothing of a trial," the young man stormed.

Mr. Yoshimura tried to change the subject.

But the young man was not to be deflected.

I looked at him as he flung out the same angry protests I had used with the women. I felt dizzy and could listen no longer.

I went outside. The sun was setting and a mild breeze brushed against my face. The young man's protest still agitated my heart. We had thought we were Americans. We born here. We were citizens. One day we were Americans — the next we were herded together with aliens and sent to a prison camp. We never thought such a thing could happen to us.

"Mitsu, we are so proud of you!" said Mother, smiling at me on the day of my graduation from high school. I had received the highest scholastic honor, the *Field's Medal.*

"Yes, you are the very first Japanese-American to win it," Father beamed.

All the students and teachers gathered around me and congratulated me. I felt so joyous inside.

Slowly I walked down the street with a confusion of thoughts and memories swirling inside me. I came to a small clearing designated as the playground area and sat down on the makeshift bench.

My gaze encompassed the metal fence meshed into diamond shapes. My eyes opened wider, but could not take in all the diamonds that extended for a mile around. I rose and walked over to the metal diamonds that went up ten feet high. On top were gleaming strands of barbed wire. Beyond the diamonds was a green tillage, fields of new lettuce, or perhaps of cabbage. My father would know, for he was a farmer. He knew the names of everything that grew in the soil. I turned and looked back at the rows of wooden barracks. The only greenery was a patch near the playground — a small area provided by the goverment authorities for inmates to raise fresh vegetables for the thirty-thousand men, women and children imprisoned in the camp.

"Mitsu!"

I turned.

The little girl with pigtails who had spoken

sadly of her grandmother was pointing to a ball that had rolled close by me.

"Mitsu!" she called again.

I picked up the ball and held it a moment, then smiled as I tossed it back to her.

CAGES

Bly Francis

PROLOGUE

When snow falls in the blue twilight and winter closes me into my house, I sometimes think back to the days of the *Wednesday Club* and the murder. I have a steady small income now and my life is lonely, but tolerable. I remember the days when I was given a prison bed to sleep in and three meals a day and that was all there was to life for people like me, people whose fault was in becoming sick.

Yesterday evening after coming home with snow-chilled feet and face, I began to sort out some boxes of old papers and photos and found Jeff's letter and the record I had written about the *Wednesday Club* and the murder. I hadn't looked at it since it happened ten years ago. It is not a pleasant memory. But reading it again, a decade later, I thought maybe I should share the experience for what it may reveal about the sick and the well. And so I have done my best with

this account, though it was painful for me to work with it at all.

I

It was a big step for us just to say "we". There were eight of us — five men and three women — in the charter membership. Billy Van Druten said each of us lived in a lonely cage because the world had driven us into it and the only way out was to love each other, freaks that we were. Billy is a Christ-lover, but he has a right to be. He had been a Christian missionary whose life led him into the purgatory of a mental hospital.

We called our group the *Wednesday Club* because we met on Wednesday nights. And we called ourselves V. E. D.'s: Veterans of Emotional Disability. We all were discharged ex-mental patients working in town and looking after ourselves and we wanted the club to be our own, not a social worker's set-up, because that way we could do more for ourselves.

Our first meeting was the only peaceful one we had because Olive came to join us at our second meeting and then we found ourselves somehow mixed up with murder. I'll explain how very shortly.

Billy Van Druten had arranged to get the use of the basement of a house in town for our meetings. The owner of the house, Estelle Baker, was an ex-mental patient herself. We knew there were about sixteen of us working in town but at our first meeting only eight of us appeared who were interested in group action and group protection. None of us actually had any strength. Our *Wednesday Club* was just a frail get-together of insecure V. E. D.'s.

Olive brought a big problem to us when she came to our second meeting. Olive was an epileptic with a pale face and very black hair. She had been the girl friend of Johnny Koster when she was inside. She appeared wearing a brown checkered dress with buttons down the front and belted at the natural waist. It was a dress long out of style that she had gotten at the Clothing Center in the hospital. After her release Olive had found a job as a nurse's aide in the Arcadia Nursing Home for the Aged. Her wages of a dollar an hour restricted her to second-hand clothes. Ex-mental patients find jobs only because they will work for marginally survival wages. Most often they get jobs in which part of the pay is board and room, like indentured servants hoping to earn their freedom. But they

never make enough to earn any actual freedom. They can plan on being indentured servants indefinitely.

I had found a job as a typist in a Tree Nursery firm. I typed address labels for the nursery catalogue. I had a college education but the hospital authorities thought I should type catalogue addresses and consider myself fortunate. I made a dollar and ten cents an hour and I wore clothes I bought at the Clothing Center. My budget for meals was frugal on my small salary. One night a town fellow took me to a movie and I silently prayed he would ask me if I'd like some popcorn because I was very hungry. He did ask me and I thought that was a score for Billy Van Druten and Christ and the power of prayer. It was the best popcorn I ever ate.

Estelle Baker thought we should all mind our manners and never let anybody know we longed for treats if we got invited anywhere. She had ideas that our *Wednesday Club* might turn out to be our social education in town somehow, but I thought this highly unlikely considering that all of us were too crippled to struggle for status or prestige or money or any of the things strong people went after. We were too bedeviled to mind our manners. I never did consider the *Wednesday*

Club to be anything except a get-together of frail beings for mutual comfort, but it made Estelle happy to think it could lead us to a higher social status.

Olive knew the *Wednesday Club* was for persons like us. At our second meeting she clasped her hands in a pleading entreaty and said over and over to us:

"Johnny didn't murder Doctor Opchek. He didn't. I know it for certain."

"How do you know Johnny didn't do it?" asked Carl Jelse.

Carl was a big good-natured fellow. He had a hunchback. Usually he was smiling, but not now.

"I tried to tell them at the hospital that Johnny and I slipped away from the dance together. We weren't supposed to, but we went into the grove. When we returned I went ahead of him and got back before he did, that's all. But Doctor Gehand and the rest of the staff think I made up the story. And now Johnny's in The Cage."

Most of us had been hospital inmates when Doctor Opchek was murdered. And we remembered the shock of it and its aftermath very well. It had happened one summer evening when the patients of four wards were having an outdoor dance. The dance floor was a large concrete

square set in the lawn, illuminated that evening by an arc light and a great full moon.

I suppose the dance was a pleasant one, but I always became depressed by the sight of the custodial patients. They were pretty weird. Actually they laughed and joked more easily than the other patients. Orville Masterson, whose nose had been bitten off by another custodial patient, was the most cheerful one that night. I suppose someone without a nose or with a hunchback gravitates more readily to laughter. I had no outer deformities. Mine were all inside. But I was gloomy at the dance. And Bill Dicks, tall and blond and handsome, was so depressed that he wouldn't even speak to anyone.

It was while *White Silver Sands* was being played by request for the fourth time that an attendant named Ed Rox came running to the dance area. The attendants wore white uniforms then. He spoke to another attendant, Ray Hefner, who was in charge of the dance. Ray shut off the record-player. The shuffling of feet went on for a few seconds, then stopped. We all looked at Ray standing there by the loudspeakers. He told us to gather in ward groups. After we lined up a check off of each patient began by name. When it was completed and as we were being taken back

to the wards I heard Ray Hefner say to Ed Rox:

"Johnny Koster is missing."

The next day we learned Doctor Opchek's body had been found outside the administrative residential apartment building on the west side of the hospital grounds. Patients who were not working gathered in the Snack Bar. And that day they had something more to talk about than inmates who had been released or brought back. It was a dark rainy day. The grapevine spread word that Doctor Opchek had been stabbed to death with an ice pick.

His body was found on the sidewalk leading to the front entrance of the apartment house where resident members of the hospital staff lived. The murderer must have been hidden by one of the large lilac bushes bordering the walk.

Doctor Opchek's car keys were missing, but his wallet containing thirty dollars was untouched. It seemed to be a slaying motivated by passion, not plunder. No mental patient ever kills for money, which is perhaps another reason why the sane world so mistrusts the mentally ill.

Still, a mental hospital seldom has a murder within its walls and most of the patients felt baffled and pretty glum about Doctor Opchek being the victim. Doctor Opchek had a reputa-

tion for being decent to the patients and we could have understood him being fired for this. We all knew it was much more important for the doctors to get along with one another than with the patients if they wanted to keep their jobs. An American doctor, briefly on the staff, refused to sign progress reports on patients he never saw. He was very quickly dismissed. Anybody should sign progress reports on patients they never see because paper work is very important. Another time there was a Polish woman doctor who was so human and sympathetic with the patients that she was forced to resign. She should have known that keeping one's professional detachment is more important than healing the friendless sick.

But actually none of the doctors stayed long. Most of them were intent on bettering themselves, like everybody else in the world. I guess its not wrong to seek better pay elsewhere, or go into private practice and get away from the institution situation. But the constant flux of doctors increased the confusion of the patients, making them feel as if they were in the hands of a multiheaded monstrosity with faces that changed endlessly. Most institutions are like irresponsible hydras, I suppose. The faces of those in charge change so frequently that no one needs take any

real responsibility for what happens to inmates. I had about eleven doctors in my history. None of them knew much about me nor seemed concerned whether I got well or died in one of the back wards.

But Doctor Opchek had been there long enough for some of the patients to care that he was dead. And it was in the afternoon of the day following the murder that the coffee drinkers in the Snack Bar heard that Johnny Koster was supposed to be the one who did it. This struck all of us with disbelief. Why would Johnny have done it? He had been officially released from the hospital for almost three months and he had stayed on while searching for an outside job, anywhere he could get one. And he had found a job in Sioux Falls just several days before the murder. Johnny had been all set to leave the hospital. Why would he murder anyone with freedom so close?

When Johnny had first been brought in he went into rages over being forced to submit to electric shock therapy. E. S.T. is a special form of psychological and physiological torture used by some doctors. And Johnny was sure his brain was being damaged. Nobody told him otherwise or made any explanations. Daily, for three weeks, he had been bound and held down while a high-

voltage electric shock crashed through his head. Once, struggling desperately against the impending torture, he threatened to kill Doctor Opchek. But afterwards, when the E. S. T. was stopped, he showed no signs of holding a grudge. He was put on pills and was a nice guy, really. Easy to get along with and played a good game of pinochle. We, who so often doctored each other and ourselves, could see he was ready to return into the outer world.

The coffee-drinkers and ice-cream-coners were told by Maxine Wright that Johnny had turned up late at the dance floor area. Maxine said she had seen Johnny being escorted by two attendants into Mordway, the violent ward. Maxine's husband had put her in a mental hospital because she had severe arthritis and could do little but sit around. And since her husband refused to take her back there was no way for her ever to get out because she couldn't work and support herself on the outside. Her mind was completely sane. Anyway, Maxine saw Johnny being escorted to Mordway. She told me he looked dismayed but was making no resistance.

Jeff came over to our table in the Snack Bar and listened to Maxine and to our opinions and comment. Jeff and Johnny were from Rapid and

had known each other since early childhood. Jeff sat listening, then silently left. He had to face it. We all had to face it. Johnny had been singled out as a murderer, and there are no trials in mental hospitals. They dispense justice in elemental ways. Johnny was now in The Cage.

II

The Cage is in the men's section of the violent ward called Mordway. No one in that ward has any privileges. Day after day their lives are immolated as they stare out through barred windows. The Cage in the violent ward is for those who rebel, or those who kill. It is a very small cell, heavily barred. That's where Johnny had been taken for an indefinite length of time. All matters of justice in a mental hospital are for an indefinite lenth of time, which, of course, is an added dimension of torture.

And that was what brought Olive to the *Wednesday Club,* where she was telling us over and over that Johnny was innocent.

"Johnny didn't murder Doctor Opchek. We were in the grove together. When we were returning to the dance, he told me to go on first alone. I got back just as the name-check began."

David Hartman looked alarmed and agitated

as he listened to Olive. David was a quiet man with a strong face and build, but he was a timid person. Sometimes he had to struggle just to be able to talk. He tried awhile and then asked:

"D-d-did you t-tell anybody besides Doctor Gehand?"

Dr. Gehand was the Superintendent of the hospital and the only psychiatrist on the staff. Few patients ever saw or talked to him. I guess most hospitals have only one psychiatrist, but ours was occupied chiefly by administrative responsibilities.

"I told my own doctor, and I told that social worker, too," said Olive. "Nobody believed me. They think I made it up"

"What did Doctor Gehand say?" asked Pearl Eichel.

Pearl is a midget. She always wore a lot of make-up, hoping to overcome aging. She had been in and out of mental hospitals for twenty-five years. Pearl seemed to find the outside world cruel to midgets.

"He said I made it up," replied Olive.

"You came back to the dance just at the start of the name-check?" asked Joel Fansa.

Joel Fansa had lustrous brown eyes and a way of leaning toward a person he was speaking to as if the conversation was always of great import-

ance. He was a slight dark-haired man and moved with a physical grace very different from the aimless shuffle many ex-mental patients keep for a long time.

"Yes, I did. Johnny said he'd follow after me in a few minutes. We didn't want, you know, to be noticed."

Billy Van Druten spoke up finally. Billy was fair-haired and his blue eyes often seemed to be focused on inward thoughts. He had an aura of quiet assurance and had somehow found his way into a serenity and acceptance of his broken life and his job as a hotel clerk. He said mildly:

"We're just a social club, Olive. It isn't right about Johnny, but what can we do?"

I am of a different temperament. I envied Billy's love of Christ, but when being a Christ-lover means justice on earth is never to be attained, or even sought, I become fierce.

"We should do something," I said. "This club should try to remedy our grievances and get some rights for mental patients. Johnny's an innocent man in a torture cage — and we are shaky people living miserable lives because nobody gives a damn. If we don't help ourselves, who will?"

There was a brief silence after my social gospel.

Then Billy, who never argues, said:

"You mean we should ask for an investigation by outside authorities?"

"B-b-but," said David Hartman, "if we cause any trouble, they'll just haul us back in to shut us up. I'm still D.O.T. for this year. They can take me back without any court action."

"And me," said Carl, "I'm working in the barns out there at the hospital. I might lose my job."

Estelle said nothing.

Leroy, an alcoholic mental patient now working in town, said:

"There ain't no authorities on the side of any mental patient. There never was and never will be."

The others nodded their heads in agreement with Leroy's hopeless social gospel and Olive said:

"Amen."

It cast a shadow over all of us — the danger of reprisals for seeking rights of mental patients and their grievances. And how effective could any of us be with the discrediting background of our former mental condition? Suddenly I too felt afraid and helpless.

"I don't want to challenge them either, I said." "But there isn't any other oppression worse than ours. We are worse off in and out of a hospital

than anybody but political prisoners in slave labor concentration camps. We have absolutely no rights, no support, no protection from cruelties and brutalities and neglect, no nothing. Even convicts can join together in group protest. But we are so sick when we're in a hospital we don't know what group action means. Each one of us is all alone when we're sick. That's our weakness. That's why they ignore us. And most of us never committed any misdemeanors beyond that of jaywalking."

"All right," said Billy. "Our *Wednesday Club* is supposed to help us learn to care about each other and play a little scrabble and express feelings. I didn't bargain for murder, but I am willing to help Johnny if we can."

"If only he hadn't said those things about E.S.T." said Joel.

"E.S.T. should be outlawed," retorted Pearl. "Why anybody should have their brains fried, I don't know."

"You can't get something outlawed if you can't even vote," I tossed out.

"Some people take E. S. T. voluntarily," said Carl.

"That's different."

"Felons can't vote," I said. "Do you know why

we can't vote? Because we're all displaced persons. None of us has a home to go to. And they don't count our residence in a mental hospital as residence for voting purposes."

"I can vote," said Pearl Eichel. "I've lived in town long enough. But nobody put E. S. T. on the ballot."

That broke us up and we all laughed in relief. Except Olive.

"You make me sick!" she cried.

We became restive again, sobered by Olive's concern. "What I want to know," I said, "is this: if all killers are considered psychos, does that mean that all psychos are killers?"

The others looked at me in confused uncertainty. But I went on.

"If we all have to live with the mark of Cain just because we can't tell the time of day, maybe we should all take up crime. What do you think?"

"I think you should help Johnny!" said Olive. "Talk and talk. Talk and talk. That's all we're doing."

"We all get treated like criminals. Or untouchables," I said relentlessly. "Johnny isn't the only one."

"Johnny's in The Cage!" wailed Olive.

"That's the law. Punish the victims of society. If they punish us enough maybe we'll really become villains. Do you think so?" I asked.

Billy's voice was gentle. "The thing that bothers me," he said, "is that they won't even let us visit him. Because we're ex-mental patients. And nobody else cares enough to visit him."

We were all stunned for a moment. "Visit somebody in The Cage?" breathed Olive. Nobody visits anybody in The Cage!"

We were all very tired. The unused scrabble game was put away and we all dispersed to our homes, such as they were.

III

The first we V.E.D.'s of *Wednesday Club* knew about the rescue of Johnny was when the local papers carried the story. INMATE ESCAPES we read. MASKED MEN FREE KILLER we read. Nobody had ever heard of a mental hospital being raided before. Or a patient being liberated this way. I suppose nobody cared enough about a mental patient to make this kind of rescue before.

The raid took place on a Sunday and the *Wednesday Club* had an emergency meeting on Monday as a result.

"Group action isn't supposed to break the

law," said Billy Van Druten. "If anybody here had a hand in this our whole club could be ruined before it really began."

"What law?" I asked. "The hospital acts as if its rules are laws. Did Johnny get a trial?"

Billy looked at me. "Bly," he said, "it's against the law to assault anyone. Whoever freed Johnny assaulted some attendants."

"No one was hurt," said Olive.

"We could work patiently for years and not get him out, using legitimate pressures," I commented.

"Where would we get the money for a lawyer?" asked Dave.

"Well if any of us here know who rescued Johnny, I hope they'll be silent about it," said Billy. "That's all I ask."

A chorus of voices went up, denying any knowledge.

"I don't know anything about it!" exclaimed Pearl.

"Nor me."

"Nor me."

Then I said:

"Just remember how swift the law is to throw someone in the hospital and how slow to see they get out again."

"It's because people don't care," said Billy. "Everyday somebody in there lives or dies that the law could free. It's people that won't help them out, who won't receive them."

"I don't exactly like people for not opening doors," I admitted.

"A mental patient has to learn to like as well as want to be liked," said Billy. "To like someone is a way out of the cage, too. You have to do *some* of the liking in the world."

Olive said quietly:

"I'm glad Johnny's out. I don't much care how."

The next day I found an envelope in my mail box with no return address on it. It had been mailed in Des Moines and contained a pencilled note, the writing a hasty scrawl:

Dear Bly— You want to know what happened about the Cage? I'm not coming back to the state anyway and I want you to know me and three other guys took group action and got Johnny out.

Yours truly, Jeff

IV

I had no thoughts of showing anyone the note. Especially not Billy. On Saturday night of that

week I went to visit Lorene Frost, who had decided to join the *Wednesday Club*. She and I were becoming better friends. Lorene, who had been a librarian, was now working in the State Hospital Patients' Library. She was from Ohio, but somehow spent time in Yanow Hospital. I didn't have enough money to go to a show that night, so we decided to go to an ice-cream social. Lorene was better off than most of us. Her job suited her education. She also made more money than the rest of us.

The ice-cream social was on the lawn of the *Our Savior* Lutheran Church and while we were there we encountered Marcus, an attendant at the Hospital, who had been trying to date Lorene. She never felt up to it. Marcus was one of the attendants tied up the night of the raid. He didn't mention the raid nor did we. It was a pleasant evening at the ice-cream social on the church lawn with strings of Japanese lanterns and a starry sky.

Later when Lorene and I were back in her apartment I said:

"Don't ever mention our *Wednesday Club* to Marcus if you go out with him."

"Don't worry, I won't, " said Lorene in her soft voice.

Lorene could not really assert herself. I myself went through a stage where I felt as if I had lost my voice when I discovered people thought I was crazy. It stunned me so I couldn't talk.

"Do you think they'll catch Johnny and whoever rescued him?" she asked me.

"I don't know," I said. "Emotionally disabled people, even veterans, are often careless or indifferent about dangers. They might get caught."

V

When Olive arrived at our next *Wednesday Club* meeting, she pulled Billy and me to one side and in a low agitated voice said:

"Billy, watch out for Joel! I'm sure he was not at the dance all the time on the night of the murder."

"Why do you think that?" asked Billy, with a tone of anxiety.

"Joel visited me last night and I noticed that he was staring at the brass ring I was wearing. Then he asked if it was Johnny's. How would he know that? I never told anyone that Johnny gave me his brass ring — he gave it to me in the grove when we slipped away together from the dance. *Nobody* knew that. How could Joel know it

if he wasn't in the grove himself watching us. And listening to us."

"Maybe he saw it on Johnny before Johnny gave it to you."

"No." Olive was adamant. "He said to me: 'So *that's* the ring Johnny wanted you to wear.'"

"You're over sensitive, Olive," Billy said.

"Joel was in for name-check." Billy said.

"So what! The name-check was after the murder was discovered."

We walked on down the stairway into the badly lit basement. When the other members arrived Billy called the meeting to order. A business meeting was going to be held before the entertainment. I glanced around the basement room, with its makeshift furniture in the dim light. Joel was not among us.

"After our business meeting tonight," Billy announced, "we have some records we can play. We borrowed them from the library. Estelle's son furnished the record player. And everyone should put twenty-five cents in that box over there on the table to pay for the kool-aid and cookies."

"Why can't we have some beer?" asked Carl. "The damn hospital gives us kool-aid and cookies."

"Because it only costs twenty-five cents each to

have kool-aid and cookies," I responded.

"Tonight I want to bring up a kind of paper Bly and I worked out. It's a statement of purpose. We want you to agree to it."

The door at the top of the stair opened. Olive and Billy and I turned expectantly, looking for Joel. It was Estelle. She came down the stairs carrying a pitcher of kool-aid.

"Read the statement," Dave said to Billy.

"I will. 'We, the emotionally disabled, believe that we are victims of circumstances and do not deserve punishments or unnecessary limitations to our pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. We wish to work as a group to improve conditions of enforced internment in hospitals; and as a group to improve the working and living conditions of those of us who have left the hospital.'"

"Read that again, will you," requested Carl.

Billy read it again, more slowly.

"What's 'internment'?" asked Leroy.

"Imprisonment," I replied.

"Are you ready for item 2?" asked Billy. "All right, here it is: 'We know that only a small number of mental patients are criminal in intent or action, and we wish to work as a group to change the image the public has of the average mental patient.'"

After a brief pause, Billy went on:

"Here's Item 3, the last item: 'We will admit no one to membership in the *Wednesday Club* who has a record of murder, rape, or wilful property destruction. We believe mental patients can take a measure of responsibility for their own behavior.'"

"I raped Dave," said Pearl.

Everyone laughed at midget Pearl because Dave was six feet three.

"Does everybody agree to these three items?"

There was a muttering of voices, then everyone became silent. They didn't know how to respond. They were not used to democratic group meetings. And they didn't even know how to vote, really. They had been second-class citizens too long.

"Well?" asked Billy.

"Everybody should vote by raising their hand," I said.

"All who agree to this statement," said Billy, "raise hands."

There was a show of hands. There was no opposition.

"Next time we'll bring up specific grievences," announced Billy. "Now let's have some music."

A hum of conversation and activity took over

for the rest of the evening. Joel did not appear.

The next day Frank Bedel, who worked with Joel at Morgan's Ice House, told Billy that Joel hadn't shown up on Thursday morning. When Billy went to Joel's room that night over on Pine Avenue, he discovered Joel had packed up his few clothes and his astrology book and gone. He had left no forwarding address.

VI

"The only trouble with rejections is that it's like judging others. Jesus told us not to judge, lest we be judged," said Billy.

We were in Cap's Cafe in Yanow, Billy and I, having coffee.

"Well," I replied, "we will have to screen members if the Veterans of Emotional Disability are going to have any kind of public acceptance." Sometimes a kind of incongruity makes me want to laugh. "All we ask is that any ex-mental patient in the V.E.D. never has killed or raped or robbed. Is that asking too much of the likes of us?"

Billy sighed.

"But we won't write down the names of anyone we reject, will we?" he asked.

"No. Dorothea Masters doesn't even know she

killed her children. She says a big black man did it. She can never be a member, if she is ever released."

"Who can judge anyone that sick?" Billy sighed again. "It's strange, isn't it that men don't often kill their own children, but women do."

"She hated her life and marriage," I said. "I can understand that —but she can't ever become a member, Billy."

"Is there anybody else you have in mind?"

"Well, Bernard raped his young sister fifteen years ago—but he'll never get out anyway. He's been custodial for so long he can't function. He's hopelessly helpless."

I glanced out of the window as sunlight flooded the late afternoon. It had been grey and rainy all morning.

"I have some grievances written down," said Billy. "We can work on them at the next meeting and see if it is at all possible to do anything about them."

"What are they?" I asked.

Billy took a small note-book from his pocket. I observed his hands were steady and I envied his calmness. Sometimes my hands shake.

He read: "'At no cost to the taxpayer, medical records of ex-patients should be kept confi-

dential and never divulged to anyone on the hospital staff except employees directly involved with the patient.'"

Glancing at me he said:

"Remember when Anne met that social worker in Sioux City where she was working as a speech therapist? That social worker had never known Anne, but he recognized her name from seeing hospital records because he once worked at the hospital. We should have some privacy in our lives and our case histories."

The pay phone in Cap's Cafe was ringing insistently.

"Here's another," said Billy. 'If any qualified person desires to do research with case histories of living persons, names of the patients should be deleted.'"

A small blond waitress called out from the pay phone. "Is there a Billy Van Druten here?"

Billy looked up.

"Yes, that's me."

He went to the phone booth. I looked idly out of the window at passersby. Billy came back and sat down and said nothing.

"Who called?" I asked.

I really didn't mean to be curious but something in his eyes impelled my question.

"Olive."

"What did she want?"

"Bly—Olive isn't getting sick again, is she?"

"She's all right as far as I know. And getting along well at the Hatchery. Why do you ask?"

"She says somebody's been in her room. She says she knows positively."

"How?"

"Because the rag poodle she keeps by her pillow on her bed was on the floor."

"The rag poodle on her pillow?"

I felt confused.

"She's scared, Bly."

"What are you talking about?"

"She thinks it was Joel. She has that thing about Joel, you know. She's sure he knows about the murder."

"You told me Joel had left town."

"I assumed he had."

"One minute you think she's sick —the next minute you think she isn't."

"She's scared, she's really scared, Bly. Would you stay with her tonight?"

"Alright, sure. I'll call her."

But less than an hour later, when I called Olive, I got no answer. I tried several more times during that evening, then gave up.

The following day I went out to the hospital, though I hardly ever went there, for I hated the place. But I had to talk to the woman who worked with patients' finances about not getting disability payments which I had found out some other people were getting. After filling out my application, I stopped in the Snack Bar. It was almost empty and I saw no one I knew. I got a cup of coffee because it was still only five cents. Then as I sat down at a table, I saw Jeff walk in, wearing jeans and fancy vest. Jeff looked right at me but made no sign of recognition. I figured he didn't want to talk to anybody, but I went over to his table anyway.

"Hello Cowboy."

"Hello."

"Is Johnny back, too?"

"Yes."

I didn't want to ask too many questions and he offered no further information. I got up to leave, thinking he preferred to be alone. He said:

"I'm glad I did it."

I sat down again. He then said:

"I think we done a pretty good job. I can't figure out how they caught up with us."

It was clear that he had been outwitted and defeated.

"Well," he sighed, "I was out for a while. God, it was so good to be back in ranch country. And I didn't have no trouble getting hired as a ranch hand either. You want to hear how we done it—the night we rescued Johnny?" His face grew cheerful and his eyes brightened.

"Sure, of course."

"It was the biggest night of my life—my whole damn life."

He lowered his voice but there was an expression of remembered joy on his face as he went on.

"One weekend I got time to go into Rapid. And not knowing what else to do, I went to the Wagon Wheeler Bar. That's a bar I used to see something of before I tangled with a goddamn hospital. And who did I run into but Dick Ripple. You know him, he's an alky."

I searched my mind. I wasn't sure I remembered Dick Ripple.

"I'm not sure," I said.

"He was a friend of Johnny's in Rapid a long time ago. He says 'Hello Cowboy' and I says 'What are you doing here?' And then we got to talking and I told him about the V.E.D. and he ast if it was like the A.A.? I says sure, only they're gonna swear off going nuts."

I winced slightly, but Cowboy could always joke.

"I told him you wrote up a paper saying no mental patient who ever killed anybody could belong to your *Wednesday Club* and he said sure, he could see where killing could ruin the club. But when we started talking about Johnny we got serious. And Dick remembered a time when Johnny bailed him out of jail. But he didn't think we could do it—get Johnny out of The Cage. He said I'd just land myself back in the hospital. I told him I hate that damn Cage and that damn hospital and all the horseshit in it. And I told him Johnny didn't do nothing — that I knew positively he was innocent — and now he was in that damn animal cage, pacing back and forth, or staring through its bars. And they'd probably taken away his clothes. I said to Dick we *had* to get Johnny out. Well, in the end, Dick — he's a daredevil, being a breed of French and Indian — you know, Bly."

I nodded, but still couldn't remember Dick Ripple. Cowboy Jeff went on.

"About our only real problem, when we decided to do it, was whether we had enough money for gas and oil, and some clothes for Johnny. I had been paying the hospital from my wages since

I went back to herding cattle, so I didn't have much.

Mike was better off than me — between us we had about fifty bucks. It would be enough. Then I remembered there was two guys in Rapid — Pinkie Hasper and Mike Beverdale — that owed me three hundred. We went to them. I didn't want their money. I told them if they'd help me and Dick I'd forget the three hundred. They wasn't working and they decided they'd do it. Me and Dick got off our jobs by claiming emergencies in our families. Dick had a good job in a bakery in Rapid — you remember, he used to work in the bake-shop here."

"He must have been a patient when I wasn't," I said.

"Well how come he knows you?"

"I don't know. Sometimes I don't remember things when I first come back to the hospital."

"Anyway we drove here in about six hours. We stayed outside Yanow till about ten that night. Then we went to the hospital grounds and drove with our headlights off up the back road to the chicken coops. We left the car hidden there. That put us behind Mordway. Then we waited for the graveyard shift to come on duty. We knew the whole routine. We stayed behind

Mordway and waited in the dark till we saw an attendant go by. Pinkie and Mike came up behind him and they had him down on the porch floor before he could make a sound. We never hit him. Just gagged him and tied him up and kept him out of sight behind the porch wall. I took his keys.

"Pinkie and Mike skunched down behind the porch wall to wait for the woman attendant coming on night duty for the first floor. Me and Dick went on to Mordway and into the woman's ward. The aide inside had her back to us. We grabbed her and tied her up. One of the woman patients sat up in her bed and stared at us. As we went to the door that led upstairs to the men's violent ward it seemed like all the women patients was waking up. One of them saw our stocking faces and yelled. We hadn't counted on that. Dick put his hand over her mouth. She didn't move. But that meant Dick would have to stay there. I went out on the porch and said 'Mike we need you.' He came in, leaving Pinkie to guard the attendant tied up on the porch.

"Mike and me went upstairs and ran smack into the attendant there. I knocked him out. I didn't have a thing against him, but I hit him. He went down with a grunt. Mike said 'Jesus' when I hit the guy. Then we ran to The Cage. I didn't

know what key was the right one. I sweated some. There was a cot in the corner of the Cage and there was Johnny. He had pajamas on. So they did give him some cover.

"Took three tries to find the right key. We opened the Cage and I just said 'Come on Johnny, it's me, Cowboy.' We hustled him out and away we went. We closed the doors behind us — we wasn't raised in no barn. But we never locked them. Not one.

"We headed for Omaha, thinking if we got out of the state we'd be better off. Johnny got dressed in the car as we took that low river road to the Interstate. Nobody uses that road hardly. I knew a woman in Omaha, but I'm not going to say any more than that. We laid low fine — but me and Johnny should of split up."

I had listened to Jeff in silence. He had stopped talking. He made a motion with his hands as if to say 'That's all there is to tell.'

Then he said:

"None of us had any guns. Or planned to have any. But I'll tell you something, Bly, I'd do it again. I sure in hell would. After all the horseshit I took here, it was the best thing I ever did."

Before leaving him there in the Snack Bar I wanted to ask him what his status now was with

the hospital. And if Johnny was back in The Cage. But I couldn't bring myself to ask those questions. It would have ruined his account of his night of victory to talk of his present defeat.

VII

My phone rang Monday morning about 5 a. m. I take pills and have to find my way out of my drugged sleep. It rang and rang, and finally I answered.

"Bly? This is Olive. It's important. I know everything now."

"What?" I asked. I tried to wake up. "What?"

She repeated that she now knew everything.

"Tell me what you know," I said.

"Joel came to see me late last night. He told me he murdered Doctor Opchek. He told me the whole thing. He was all shook up. He cried."

I couldn't say anything for a while.

"He told me, Bly," insisted Olive.

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said.

I thought a moment. Billy was always weighing things. I tried it. I said: "Sometime sick people confess things they don't do."

"He said the keys to Doctor Opchek's car and

apartment are buried by one of the fence posts near the grove."

"The keys?" I grappled with what to do about all this. "If we found the keys, we'd know for sure."

"Yes, oh yes," said Olive.

"Well," I said, "I go out there now and then to visit Wilma. Nobody would pay any attention to us walking by the fence posts. I mean they wouldn't think it was extraordinary."

"Do it."

"There's hardly anybody ever out there by the vegetable fields."

"Oh, said Olive, "I think the tomatoes are ripe now. There'll be patients picking tomatoes."

"I'll try," I said. "But I'll have to wait till next Saturday or Sunday. Visiting hours and my working hours don't work out."

When the receiver clicked and Olive was disconnected from me, I stood and stared out of the window at the lawn fronting the house I had a one-room apartment in. My house was right across from the police station. At times that made me feel safe. Right then it did not. With Cowboy Jeff's letter in my closet and the knowledge that somehow justice was not always done, I didn't feel safe. I always had an ambiguous attitude

toward the police.

The next Saturday afternoon on visiting hours I went to see Wilma. I took out a visitor's slip and thought how idiotic for me to go out to dig around fence posts. In my bag I had put a large cooking spoon I planned to dig with. Anybody working in the fields would be able to see Wilma and me digging. Maybe they'd think we were hunting for rock specimens. We could pretend we had become rock hounds.

Wilma was working in the Snack Bar, but they let her go when I came to visit her. Visitors exempt a patient from work often. Wilma was pleased to see me because of this. She took off her apron and we left the Snack Bar. On our way out Mari Tuvvy stopped us and said, "You're looking well, Bly."

"You, too, Marie."

"I had cancer of the breast and surgery."

"Here at the hospital?" I asked.

"Where else could I afford it?'

When we were out of earshot Wilma said:

"Marie is resigned to staying here till she dies."

"Sure — an alcoholic at 65 with nowhere to go. But she's really a welfare case and shouldn't be imprisoned here."

"A lot of people here are welfare cases and

shouldn't be confined. I myself can't get a job and get out," said Wilma. "Still, I'm grateful to have somebody like Marie on the ward to talk to. She's straight in the head. In that ward I'm living in most of the patients just wander around and don't say anythng sensible."

I led our walk toward the grove and suddenly Wilma asked: "Why are we going this way? There's no path there."

"I want to take a look at the fencing by the grove."

"What for?"

"Joel Fansa told Olive the keys to Doctor Opchek's car and apartment are buried by the fence at the edge of the grove. I'm going to look for them. This big spoon is to dig with — it's not a present for you."

"Doctor Opchek's keys!" cried Wilma. "What makes Joel say the keys are there?"

"He says he murdered Doctor Opchek."

I felt very tired suddenly.

Wilma stopped short. I stopped beside her and we looked at each other in silence. Wilma is a mental patient who had to be committed when she got a divorce. Somehow she never matched the rest of us, because in all her stay she struggled to assert her own way of life. Furthermore she

never had a hair out of place. Jan Borsch the social worker, who tried to place Wilma in jobs, said that Wilma absolutely would not work. There was a feud between them over this. And it was Wilma who never turned a strand of hair or misplaced a hemline in the feud. I envied Wilma's self concern and self assertion. She refused to be a workhorse. She seemed to feel society could accept her on some other terms than her compliance to be exploited as cheap labor. She was not qualified to do anything, but still she maintained this attitude. She knew what she realistically wanted unlike most mental patients I had known. She once told me she wanted a hysterectomy, false teeth, and another husband. She had already gained the first goals from the hospital and she was working on the third.

The inmate farmworkers were picking tomatoes in the fields some distance from the grove. I took out my cooking spoon and said:

"Where should I start?"

"Look for some dug up earth near a post fence," suggested Wilma. "But I think it's crazy."

"You're absoultely right. It is crazy," I said. "And you should be released for a remark like that."

"I am released. I just can't get an outside job."

I noticed near one fence post the earth was bare of grass. I dug a little. Nothing. I covered the hole.

"There was some excitement in the Snack Bar today," said Wilma. "Betty Rawley, who works in the kitchen, picked up a meat knife and slashed her wrists."

"Sick, sick, sick," I said. And then I added: "Poor sappy, sick soul."

"Have you never wanted to?"

"Once."

I had been digging almost absent-mindedly at a spot that was lumpy and dried in clumps around the bottom of a fence post and suddenly I saw the glint of metal. I felt a surge of fear. I scraped away the dry dust and there the keys were. On one key was a dark red streak. Blood.

VII

There were eight of us at the next *Wednesday Club* meeting: Billy Van Druten, myself, Olive, Dave Hartman, Carl Jelse, Pearl, Leroy, and Lorene. Estelle was out of town and had given the keys to the house to Billy. We were a sort of a core. Other ex-mental patients in town attended

meetings now and then, but they could not believe in group effort.

The meeting was called to order. I showed them the keys, handling them carefully with a handkerchief and putting them back into the envelope. Olive told them of Joel's confession to her. After our simple stark statements, Dave Hartman struggled to find his voice, found it, and said:

"What do we do now?"

Suddenly we were all talking at once.

"We can't be informers. How could we?"

"To clear Johnny we could."

"I suppose there are fingerprints on the keys."

"Could Johnny sue the newspapers and the hospital for calling him a murderer before he had a trial?"

We all went on talking excitedly, hardly pausing.

"Will the hospital or Doctor Gehand listen to us if we show the keys to him?"

"I want to remind everyone that the *Wednesday Club* is not a police agency. We exclude people who do violent things, but we are not informers. We don't cause people to be charged with murder."

"We have to clear Johnny."

"Isn't it a citizen's duty to turn in this kind of information?"

"The hospital is our citizenship and our law. Not the police."

"I thought the *Wednesday Club* was going to play scrabble and have a good time and that was all we were going to do," wailed Pearl. "My head is aching. I feel sick."

The sound of the upstairs door opening silenced us. As if we hoped to find the answer to all our doubts and anxieties, we turned to see who was coming. We saw a figure emerge from the upper shadows, then we saw Joel descending the stairs.

Step by step he came until he stood on the bottom one. He stared at us. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair uncombed.

Billy finally said:

"Hello, Joel."

Joel moved uncertainly toward us. Pearl shrank back.

"Sit down," I said.

It was an effort to say it. Joel sat down on an old dining room chair held together by twine.

He looked at us. No one said anything.

"She told you," he said.

Nobody answered.

He put his face in his hands.

Then Billy said quietly:

"It's up to you to turn yourself in, Joel."

Joel raised his head. Staring at Billy, he said:

"I don't want to spend the rest of my life in Mordway," he said.

Everyone remained silent.

There was saliva coming out of the corner of his mouth. His graceful hands fell limp. Mordway evoked in everyone's mind thoughts of Johnny. Joel realized it. He turned to Olive.

She looked away.

I felt I had to say what I was going to say. In a low voice, I said:

"We don't want you among us. Either you leave or we will."

"I came here for help, " he pleaded. "I can't sleep anymore."

His appeal fell into silence. Somewhere in the direction of Main Street a police siren sounded. No one paid any attention.

"He was a cruel tin god. I hated him. He thought he was a God with absolute powers. My brain was all I had. Nobody has a right to torture people with electricity."

David Hartman's hesitant voice emerged. The struggle for speech showed on his face.

"Once — once a m-man I worked for m-made

fun of me. Of how I talk. I n-never hurt him. I wanted to. I wanted to choke him. I r-ran and ran and ran. But I never choked him."

I looked down at the floor. I felt very far away from them for a moment because I never talked about my former husband. I said:

"I got a revolver out of a dresser drawer when — when my husband said all women were whores. I'd lived with him for ten years. I wanted to kill him. I meant to."

Billy stared at me.

"I threw the gun out of a window," I said.

"I've never wanted to kill anybody in all my life," said Pearl.

"Neither did I, said Carl.

"There's never a good enough reason is there?" I asked.

"I don't know!" shouted Joel. "People kill! They do!"

Somebody had to say killing wouldn't solve things.

"Just in self defense, people can kill," I said uncertainly. "In this club we can't be killers. Maybe not even in self defense. I don't know."

I had resisted the need to commit murder once in my life and I resented every criminal who claimed to be sick. I was so sick when I did *not*

kill that I spent years in and out of hospitals. I resented anyone thinking that sick people were murderers and criminals. We were sick because we did *not* say and do the hostile acts we were provoked to say and do.

"We can't afford people like you," I said.

I got up and went to the stairs. I turned around and looked at the others.

" You want to go on being treated like criminals—you people? Walk out on him," I said.

Carl stood up and said to Joel in a puzzled way:

"How could you plan so good? When I was sick I couldn't even remember the time of day. You're too smart."

Olive asked in a whisper:

"How could you let Johnny take the blame for what you did?"

Olive and Carl walked up the steps and left. Joel sat with his eyes closed.

Pearl, Dave and Leroy followed in turn. Only Billy remained seated, inwardly torn by the choice between Joel and the Club.

And then Billy, too, got up. He paused over Joel's bowed figure and gently said:

"Christ accepts you at your worst, Joel."

Joel didn't move. Billy put his hand on Joel's

shoulder, his farewell touch. Then he went up the steps. I followed. I glanced back. Joel, now alone, sat huddled in the chair under the bare lightbulb. The rickety furniture was scattered in the shadows of the room.

We left him there.

Later that night, when Billy went back, Joel was gone. Billy locked the house.

Two nights later Billy got a phone call from Estelle, who owned the house our Club met in. She had been away in Wisconsin for several days visiting her brother.

Billy told me, afterwards, that all she said was:

"My God, come over here. Hurry."

And that she was crying hysterically.

Billy ran down the street to Estelle's house. It was a Friday night. The stores were open and I was shopping for a ream of manila paper. Billy saw me as I came out of the Five and Ten. He stopped, breathing hard, and said:

"Estelle is in some kind of trouble. Come with me."

We found Estelle's door unlocked and went in. Estelle was in her kithen. She clutched at me and Billy.

"Joel," she kept saying. "Joel."

"Where?" asked Billy.

"In the basement."

Billy hurried donw the stairs. I followed him.

Joel's limp body was hanging from a rafter, his face terribly dark and his uninhabited eyes bulging. His head was bowed as if in prayer.

EPILOGUE

The day I came upon my old record of the *Wednesday Club* and the murder, I found myself reading it through. Afterward I put on my parka and walked down to see the river. Its surface was frozen over and the stark trees along the banks were gesturing in mute motions.

The *Wednesday Club* foundered over Joel. It simply fell apart. We had meant to show we did not hold any power of life and death to threaten society — and we discovered we had the power of life and death over our own members. We had caused Joel to kill himself.

"God forgive us for passing judgment on a sick man," Billy had said.

"Death is preferable to solitary life imprisonment," I responded. I am not sentimental about life when it is reduced to a solitary cage. Myself,

all these years, all that kept me alive was the same rage that made me sick. I raged myself into a will to survive and then to live.

But I remember how we condemned Joel who defended himself by killing a 'tin god" with punitive power over him. And I still wake up sometimes in the night and remember that I condemned Joel. We figured out that Joel was still in the house when Billy went back to lock it. Then, when he was left totally deserted by us and locked in all alone, he hung himself. Did he feel hopelessly alone? Or did he feel this was a kind of atonement? Who of us here in the dimensions of time and mortality will ever know?

Further events in the past ten years scattered the charter members of the Veterans of Emotional Disability. Only Pearl and Carl and Estelle and myself are left in the area now. Except, of course, other ex-mental patients provisionally released and working out their indentured labor to earn a token freedom and marginal existence in outer society.

The V.E.D. had hidden potentialities. Like running water alive in the depth of winter under ice and snows. There was promise in having V.E.D.'s help themselves and each other. The last time I saw its founder, Billy, was just before he

left for Peru. He'd been re-instated as a missionary there. We walked across the town to the East Side Park where the pond rippled in a little breeze and near the children's merry-go-round we found a place to sit in the shade. Across the Avenue the bells of Mount Matta Church and campus rang out.

"There is no healing in their philosophy," said Billy quite absently, almost as if he were speaking aloud to himself.

"You mean the magicians of mental medicine?"

"More the people of the ministry. And ourselves. There is no healing in our philosophy about the mentally ill. Everyone expresses an opinion, but nobody heals. A mental patient is possessed by demons. A mental patient is a sinner. A mental patient is responsible for his sickness. A mental patient should think of others. A mental patient is *guilty* of being sick. His unacknowledged guilt is the source of his sickness."

"I know. People do not say a man is guilty of cancer or a heart attack. But he is, if sickness involves any guilt at all. It is hard to be serene while in pain. And psychological pain is worse than physical pain, I know it. And more endless," I said with feeling.

"Maybe a hospital can only really offer food and sleep and medicine while Mother Nature heals us," said Billy.

"That's so slow. Mother Nature needs some help. I've been relapsing for eight years at these lousy jobs I get."

"I think many other people are sick, too, but they are either tougher or less truthful about it. Sometimes they *are* truthful about it. Did you ever seek help and have someone say: 'Well, I have my problems, too.' But they can keep up the daily pretenses and bear the stresses somehow."

I really wanted to know the answer to these things. So did Billy.

"Which takes the most guts? To keep one's life somehow together even though you are sick at heart, or to suddenly let it all go and say in effect 'Damn it all, I have had emotional needs all my life that nobody made any attempt to meet and now I am going to give in to being so sick that somebody *has* to meet my needs.' Which takes more daring?" I asked.

Billy remained silent.

I went on:

"You know how frightening and reckless it is to give up all your own pitiful attempts at self determination, at self control, at self discipline,

at self negation, at self will, at self ego — and just throw yourself on the mercy of the world. To say no matter how sick the world says it is, *I am sicker* — and to throw yourself on the mercy of whatever happens."

Billy kept looking at me intently as I spoke.

"It's strange," he said. "That's very much the way one comes to Christ. You know... giving up the pitiful attempts at self determination, self discipline, self negation, self will, self ego — and just throwing one's life recklessly on the mercy of Christ," I said.

I thought that over.

"The mental patient mistakes the world for Christ then. The mental patient gives up and throws himself on the mercy of the world instead of Christ."

"But many sane people mistake the ways of the world — and of hospitals — for the ways of Christ. Or do they feel more threatened by Christ than by all the hells that can be invented?" asked Billy.

"It is all too deep for me," I sighed. "Why do we have to figure it out ourselves?"

I don't know," admitted Billy. 'But I think the blind are being led by the blind. Mental illness is more of an injury than a disease. We were in-

jured very badly by life and we were maddened by our attempts to live in an injured condition. I just want to function in spite of my disability, I guess. Get wise to what I can and can't do. Function somehow."

He reached over and touched my hand lightly.

"Are you afraid to care about me?" he asked. "Are you able to care about someone?"

"Or you me?" I asked. "Will you write me now and then from Peru?"

"I will."

Our *Wednesday Club* is no more but I still say "we" sometimes. Billy was right when he said that most of us V. E. D.'s had been more disabled, injured, and destroyed by our fellow human beings than we had been by our emotional disabilities. Anyway it all hurts. I know that. We V. E. D.'s all know that. And someday we'll start to fight back, halt and lame and fearful though we be. Someday.

BATMAN

Stephen Ecton

I worked as a lawyer for Legal Aid for awhile. No money in it, but you'd hear some good stories. And you could act it up in court. I remember this middle-aged Puerto Rican arrested because of a woman's complaint that he had made sexual advances while pressed against her in a crowded morning subway train. And he'd brought his whole family down to court. I made a stirring speech and the judge kept interrupting me with sarcastic remarks. He was a hard-nosed judge. He gave that poor guy six months. After being sentenced the guy tried to say goodbye to his wife and the court officials were yelling at him. Then two cops started to drag him out, but I made them let him say goodbye to his wife.

That was a hardnosed judge. He sent almost everybody up. And any time I had a Puerto Rican kid to defend, I knew that kid was going to drag time. I remember once I just said: "Here's the defendant, your honor!" By then I was tired of going through the motions of even trying. And Jesus! was the judge mad at that. He halted

the proceedings and ordered me back into his chambers. Lectured me for almost an hour. About the ethics of the legal profession! Jesus. When we returned to the court-room he sent that kid up just because he was under suspicion of being a cop killer. And he was a bright kid. You hated to see bright kids get sent up, or any kids.

Batman was the most feared cop in Manhattan. He got his name one cold winter night when he lept from the roof of one building across to another with his heavy blue police topcoat floating behind him.

"Here comes the goddamn *Batman!*"

That's all Willie had time to say before *The Young Kings* grabbed what they could of the club's arsenal and ran.

The name stuck because *Batman* was one of the cruellest and most effective cops around. Street kids have no sense of irony and for them to call a limping green-and-black police Ford the *Batmobile* and to name the other fat and stupidly sluggish cop who rode in the prowl car *Robin* fleshed out the legend they were forming around themselves.

"The last big fight we had around here, Labor

Day three years ago, *The Young Kings* and *The Assassins* turned out five hundred kids in Central Park. And *Batman* was right there in the middle of us, yelling he was going to shoot the balls off the first one who made a move. The other cops were so afraid they huddled behind *Batman,* Willie related.

The others, out of boredom of endless nights on street corners, listened to the only one among them whose fame extended beyond a five block area.

"Five hundred kids just looking each other over. We weren't going to fight then. We just turned out, but everybody was nervous. All of us knew we were going to fight later that night, but we had no idea where. We agreed to limit it to twelve on a side and we chose as our battleground a place in Riverside Park on the side of a slope where the highway traffic is above you and no one can hear anything. But the fight had only gotten started good when that superdude *Batman* arrived with his siren blowing. Three of the youngest kids tried to scramble up the embankment onto the highway and the cops shot them in the back. Three kids shot in the back for just trying to run away. And not one of them had even as much as a knife on them. The police officials and the city officials and the newspapers, nobody did nothing. All the

Spanish people, even the Dominicans, were very mad about that.

"The killer cops would probably have gotten away with it, but then *Robin* picked up a kid on *Batman's* day off, Jose Rodrigues's brother. He picked him up here in the park, in that area behind the precinct station house. The people saw him do it. He took the kid through Riverside Park and claimed he busted the kid's head open when the kid tried to escape. *Robin* killed Jose Rodrigue's kid brother over an alleged theft of a bicycle.

"Nobody goes through Riverside Park to get to the station-house. Everybody knows that. We had wild demonstrations and no cops left the station-house. The mayor himself appeared in his official car to talk to us on Manhattan Avenue.

"The mayor told us they were going to send all the cops to a police college to learn better manners and how to get along with people. They sent *Batman* and *Robin* down to Puerto Rico for two weeks. So they could learn all they needed to know about Puerto Ricans."

The camp I used to go to in the summer, it was a rich boys' camp, but it was an intelligently run rich boys' camp. We played golf, tennis, had trap shooting and water skiing. But the great

thing they had was a Batman and this was long before the new wave of Batman popularity hit the scene.

And if the Batman was caught and unmasked and identified, the kid who captured him would get week-night passes into town and as much dessert as he wanted and I don't know what all. Imagining his capture kept us in a perpetual state of frenzy.

The first time Batman appeared, he came swinging by on a rope outside the dining hall windows during Sunday lunch. You should have seen the kids go pouring out after him. But he had vanished.

The counselors spent hours planning Batman incidents like that. But none of the counselors had as much imagination as we did. The counselors divided us into Blues and Reds and one summer a counselor of the Blues took all his kids into town after locking up everything. Those of us left in camp ordered a delivery of hot dogs and ice cream from town. Then we spent all Sunday morning blockading the roads to keep the other kids out. They finally came through behind a bulldozer. God, was that fantastic.

Afterwards the counselors organized a football game with goal posts half-a-mile apart to settle

things between the Reds and the Blues, with twenty-five kids on each side. Several nights later, while all of us were watching a movie after supper, Batman came swinging down across the screen. God, what a night.

The remnants of *The Young Kings* stood and hunkered around the side entrance of an Irish bar on 98th Street. Occasionally one of the group descended several steps down the basement steps of a nearby tenement to urinate. Others, less modest, pissed onto the street like wolves defining their territory.

Across the way, near the 24th Precinct station house, shadowy figures moved through the playground park adjoining the new housing project monoliths that were transforming the neighborhood for a third time in the past ten years.

A neighborhood wino stumbled out of the bar into the group of *Young Kings* before he realized he was in their midst.

"Hey Pete, that's Willie! Better be careful."

"Did I ever show you this," asked Pete nervously, handing Willie a chain with a Star of David on it. "A Jewish refugee gave it to me."

Willie tossed the chain and Star into the gutter and the man stared at Willie's hand, tightly

wrapped around something in his pocket.

"Irishmen cut easily," said Willie.

"Don't you talk about cutting me. I graduated from Cardinal Hayes High School. I fought for my flag. I want you to know that. Don't you talk about cutting me. I fought for my country."

He scooped up the Star of David and fled. The group accepted Willie for a moment, acknowledging the entertainment inherent in violence. Turning to them, Willie said:

"Smoking's no good," said Willie, to the group. "Nobody fights who smokes."

He had just returned on parole from an upstate New York prison. He had abandoned his jitterbugging walk but he wore his old fighting vest without a shirt. To the other kids, four or five years younger, he was a figure from the past. They didn't goof on him and no one considered him a hick, but all of them were into drugs and he was from the time of street-fighting. His reputation gave him shades of darkness deepened by his black vest, his glistening pomaded raven-black hair razored into straight lines, and his black Basque beret.

"Those cops in the 24th, they're the worst in town," Willie said. "You're sitting on a bench in the precinct-house and some off-duty cop comes

by and bam: What're you doing here punk! You haven't even been charged yet — and this guy's got nothing to do with it. I was sitting between two file cabinets, my hands handcuffed behind my back. And this *Robin* comes by. He's off duty but he says: 'Willie, stand up.' I shook my head, unh-unh. 'Stand up!' I shook my head. *Blap!* Now the cop I pulled the gun on, he didn't do nothing. But this cop *Robin* he's got to hit me.

"I beat that one though. My mother hired a lawyer, gave him fifty dollars and he didn't do nothing. So she wouldn't give him the fifty he wanted the next time and the cop didn't show up, so they threw it out.

"The last time my legal aide came back he looked at me and said. 'You're going to get a lot of time Willie, do you know that? He didn't even ask me if I did it. Nobody did. And at the trial he just said to the judge: 'Here's the defendant your honor.' That's all he said."

Bobo came walking up the street with his jittery disorganized walk, easily identifiable from two blocks away, the walk that meant something had happened, a fight, an arrest, a murder. He stopped along the way to tell something to those seated on tenement steps and he veered crazily from left to right when he started up again.

"Something's wrong with Bobo in the head," Frank said. Frank was the only Negro in the group. "You go to the doctor with him and I don't care how many people in that room, they take him first."

"He got busted one summer nine times," Louie said.

Louie, a slight guy forty pounds lighter than Frank, was the leader of the group.

"He's been hit on the head too many times by cops' clubs. And once he fell head first down an elevator shaft," Frank said.

"I'll tell you this is a rotten world," Bobo shouted to the group as he approached them. "Jose Rodrigues is dead. They got his body back from Vietnam up at the funeral home. His mother don't understand. She can't read English and she didn't show no one the telegram. I bawled. I couldn't help myself. I bawled."

"Jose," said Willie, softly.

"Come on Eddie, walk me up to the funeral home," Bobo said.

"Jose wanted to be a marine all his life. All his life since he was a little kid," Willie said. "He'd go out by himself and drill. He never did nothing with us. He was afraid he'd get a record and the Marines wouldn't let him join. The only time he

got mad was when *Robin* killed his kid brother. And even then he wouldn't do nothing with us. Just went off on his patrols by himself. Everybody thought he was afraid of *Batman*."

"There's something funny about it," Bobo said. "He was a squad leader and he was wounded near the front and the medics were right there. Carlos was in Vietnam — he said nobody dies of that kind of wound. No one knows how come Jose died. His time was up and he could've come home but he didn't. Come on Eddie. All the neighborhood's out. You never seen so many people. Willie you coming?"

"Yeah, in a couple a minutes," Willie said.

Eddie and Bobo walked away.

"When I was home Jose made me stay with him all day to study his test. I didn't want to but he made me. He had everybody helping him, even that goddamned *Batman*. And then the recruiting sergeant told him all the answers anyway."

A patrol car swung around the corner hard and stopped before anyone could move. *Batman*, a ruddy, tall, strongly built Irishman jumped out of the car while the driver raced the motor. *Batman* stood before the group silently for a moment tapping his night stick against his hand, then he lashed it down at Louie's hand smashing a bottle

of brandy that had been covered by a brown paper sack.

He turned to Willie and stared at him.

"They told me you were back. You're the only kid out here that I don't hope stays out. I'm glad they got you last time. You're no good. A good kid like Rodriguez gets killed for his country and a punk like you hangs around on the streets."

Willie stood straight and stared back levelly but remained silent. He'd been clubbed too many times to talk back, but his silence conveyed his contempt.

"You're no good. You got no family life. It's as simple as that. Me, I thought about dropping out of school. Most kids do, I guess, at some time or the other. And my father says to me. 'You do and I'll break both your legs. I'll break the both of your legs and you'll never get work.' That's the kind of discipline I had. But you Puerto Ricans, your mother's no good, your father's no good. No point in pouring all this money into you. My brother was wild. He was the kind of guy who wanted to fight in the street all the time. He was wild, but not bad like you. Those kind of kids you just gotta give a chance to grow up. That's what I like about being a cop. And the money. There's no better paying job anywhere

without a college degree. What I don't like is watching *Robin's* kids grow up without a father. That's why I'm going to get you again, Willie. And I'm going to get you good. The rest of you had better stay away from this punk if you don't want to get hurt."

"We big enough to decide for ourselves" Frank said.

The night stick crashed down hard against the side of his elbow.

"Still like to preach, don't you *Batman*. Nobody but *Robin* ever listened to you," Willie said.

"Get moving off this corner. I don't want to have to keep telling you. I got better things to do than to keep moving you off this corner."

"Let's go," Willie said softly.

The group turned from *Batman* and walked off towards the funeral home.

The greatest time of all was when we were swimming and Batman came by on water skiis. We tore out after him. It's lucky none of us got drowned. After that he'd appear every two weeks or so. Once we were at a campfire when he appeared out of the darkness. We rushed after him and he managed to keep barely ahead of us for two hours before he lept onto the rear of a pass-

ing pickup truck. It took us all night to find our way back to camp.

Batman was like still believing in Santa Claus when you're fifteen.

Spanish women dressed in black were pressing to enter the funeral home. The steps and sidewalk were crowded. *The Young Lords* halted across the street and slouched against a laundromat.

"*Batman,* the first time I met up with that superdude, I came up to the corner of 104th and Amsterdam with my jitterbug walk, my pants hitched way up to here, and a voice comes out of a car: 'Willie' — he knew my name — 'Come here.' So like a fool I went there. He took me into a hallway, frisked me up and down and *blap!* I'm upside a wall. 'Why'd you hit me,' I said. 'Shut up or I'll hit you again. Why don't you stay over on the East Side.' 'My girl's over here.' 'Stop lying! We know why you came here. Where's Johnny Christian?'

"Now at that time Johnny Christian was the biggest gun dealer on the East Side. I'd heard of him but I didn't know who he was. So when I got back I spread the word that *Batman* was looking for Johnny Christian. And Johnny Christian went so scarce nobody could get a piece

for six weeks. That's what happened when *Batman* went after you."

"Batman comes to the corner all the time looking for a roach," Louie said. "You standing on the corner and he comes up and says to his partner: 'All right, keep them busy' and he gets out his flash light and starts looking." Brandy and amphetamines had given Louie his high and he squinted and waved his hand around. "You be on Amsterdam Avenue and he goes all the way to Broadway before he finds a halfsmoked joint. Then he comes running back, waves that joint in your face and busts you."

"Batman'll put stuff on you, man. He put some joints on me," Frank complained. "I never smoke."

"That's true man, you just steal," Louie said, and there was a quick slap of hands. "Dig Willie, second time Frank was sent up — you'll never believe this — he went back to the same building he used to live in, everybody knows him there, and he robbed an old lady's purse. How's that for stupid?"

"At least I'm not dealing to little kids," Frank said clearly through the laughter and a quick slap of hands.

"What's that, brother?"

"You heard me."

"I didn't like what I heard."

"Make your play."

"You wait, brother. You wait."

"They kicked us off the corner so we went to the Center and formed a social club with permits from the precinct and everything," Willie said. "We'd been there about a week when in comes *Batman*. 'Willie, come outside, someone wants to talk to you.' It was the head of the *Youth Patrol* for the whole city. He says: 'What you got going here?' I said: 'What do you mean, this is a social club, look, here's our sweater emblem, it says: *Young Kings Social Club.*' But those dudes never gave us a chance.

"Another night *Batman* catches me down at the Center and he says: 'Willie, you run fast today' and he gives me this big smile. *Robin* is behind him and he starts shaking all over the way he always did when *Batman* was in a good mood. *Robin* was scared to death when *Batman* was not in the *Batmobile* right next to him. 'Yeah Willie, you run fast today, he echoes. What happens, we're all at Booker T. in the playground when the patrol car comes. Now you can't start running then or they'll just speed up, so you have to wait until they stop and get out, then you take

off. They can't shoot you in the back for doing that.

"We were playing stick ball at Booker T. and *Batman* comes up. 'O.K., throw those sticks into the gutter.' We are playing a nice peaceable game and he makes us throw them away. We had broom handles and everybody has his own favorite, you know a special weight. I spent a long time on mine, getting it right. I said: 'Officer' and he says: 'Throw it in the gutter!' We never played stickball again."

"Willie talks so much about *Batman* you'd think he loves that superdude," Frank said.

"Those cops at the 24th," Louie said. "Dig it, we're on the corner, so *Batman* chases us off. Says: 'Why don't you go over to the park.' We're over at the park riding bicycles and *Batman* stops and says: 'All right, where'd you steal them bikes?' "

"When I went up to Elmira" said Willie. "There was this man sitting behind a desk filling out a form and he says, 'Are you white or black?' I'm right in front of him and he asks me that. I say: 'I'm Puerto Rican.' He says; 'I didn't ask you that. I asked you if you were white or black.' I said: 'I can't tell you that, I'm Puerto Rican.'

"When I came first here from Chicago my English teacher said: 'Watch out for yourself, now.

Those Puerto Ricans around here will knife you, they'll stab you.' And I said to her: 'What do you mean, don't you know that I'm Puerto Rican.' She thought I was Mexican. So then she says; 'I'm sorry, I didn't know.'

"And *Batman* the first time he spoke to me, said: 'Why do all you spics come over here and stab people. They might let you do that in Puerto Rico, but you're in America now.' I said to him: 'I came to this country when I was eight, and everything I learned, I learned on the street from white Americans. He kicks me in the ass. Then I go get a knife."

Bobo came across the street from the Booker T. playground that stretched out now into empty blackness. Bongo and drums were being played softly somewhere. A fire sprang up in the park to warm the drum heads.

"Jose looks nice, man. You can't even tell what happened. He looks like he's sleeping in his uniform."

"You don't look nice when you're dead," Willie said.

"Jose does. Hey Willie, you know what his mother's saying? She says Jose killed *Robin.* She says he wrote her about it in letters."

"Yeah."

"You think he did it?"

"Ask Jose."

"Everybody says you did it."

"You killed *Robin*. Everybody knows that."

"What happened to that *Robin* punk, I threw a brick through the *Batmobile* from a rooftop and Batman got out and came up to the roof. But I was gone and when he came back down *Robin* was dead. I don't know who did it. Batman's still looking for who did it. Jose should have done it — that's what I told him. *Batman* thinks I did it but I swear to God I didn't. I would've done it. Any of us would have. *The Kings* had taken an oath to do it and *Batman* knew it, but I was president and if any of them had done it they would've told me. Maybe Jose did it. I hope he did. He should have. I told him he should have."

"Frank, walk me down to the pizza parlor."

Willie had lapsed into silence and *The Kings* broke off in twos and threes, walking over to the park to smoke or pop pills. Then they returned to the front of the laundromat and poured beer into paper sacks that passed from hand to hand. They were getting nice before they went into the funeral home. More than ever Willie was not one of them.

"My boss is strict, he makes a face if I'm five

minutes late," Louie said. "He heard us talking about going to Colgate Gardens and he said: 'I like to dance Latin. Do you like to dance the meringua? And he did a couple of steps like this ..." Louie bent over from his waist and held his arm straight out and slid across the sidewalk. Everyone goofed. "Like man, he was still doing the tango. The hicks, man, they're still back in the thirities."

"I was going to take the test for the sanitation office during my vacation. My parole officer said: 'Willie I encourage you to take the test.' But I didn't. You never see a Spanish fellow doing that. So that's two strikes against me. Now that I'm back out, I'm content. That's the trouble, you get content."

"It's better to get nice, man," Louie said and there was the quick slap of agreeing hands.

As if reminded, two of the group broke off and went over to the park. The press of women in front of the funeral home was subsiding, but *The Kings* would pay tribute as long as their highs held.

"This kid up in East Harlem, he was a fighter, a boxer; and this other kid tore him up, so Tarzan shot him. Said he didn't want to use his hands because he was afraid he would hurt them. *Bat-*

man brought him in. He went up there on the roof all by himself. No other cop would go with him. I wouldn't even have gone with him. Tarzan came out of the station with his hands over his head and all the punk *Assassins* were out there cheering. *Batman* went up there and smacked Tarzan, five, six times in front of a whole crowd until Tarzan's nose was bleeding and he began to cry. They suspended *Batman* for a month. That was the only thing he ever did that I respected. That Tarzan was a punk."

I was a counselor my last year there and it wasn't as much fun as being a camper. I was Batman once. We spent hours scheming on the perfect appearance. Mine was at Chapel service on Sunday morning. That was the one time no one was permitted to come after Batman, and I sat on the roof tantalizing them. Just before Chapel was over I took off and I had no trouble keeping ahead of their pursuit. But I tripped badly over a tree root and broke an ankle. I crawled under some shrubbery and they went by me. I spent fourteen hours crawling through underbrush before the other counselors found me. They were worried over where I had disappeared. No Batman had ever been caught.

The only bad thing about that mishap was my ankle didn't heal straight and I lost my track scholarship at Southern Cal. So I had to go to Yale to become a lawyer because my father wouldn't pay for anywhere else.

In the park the drums were louder and wilder. The younger kids were swinging from the wire netting of the baseball backstop and from the high wire fence surrounding the playground. Fires had sprung up all over the playground and shadows flitted weirdly and more of the neighborhood drifted over to the playground and after a while only Willie remained in front of the funeral home. He had spent so much time in solitary that he was used to being alone talking to himself for protection.

"I'm quitting my job," he said to the city night. They're taking advantage of me because I'm on parole. *Batman* has been telling them stuff. They know I need the job to stay out. That other fellow, where I was working before, said he'd take me back if I wanted a job. Everyone else gets regular wages for working. Why not me? That guy running the freight elevator for four days got his pay. I'd rather go down on my hands and

knees and lick the dirt up from the street than be taken advantage of. That guy thinks because I'm on parole he can take advantage of me..."

MOURNING

Tom Page

Mournful the waves that break
along the shore of Valparaíso,
Mournful the sailor's wake
in the cárcel of Talcahuano,
Colder the grave that waits
outside of Santiago,
Barren the peasant's heart
on the land around Hundido.

— September 12, 1973

THUNDERHEAD

Tom Page

An oil streaked engine
stands on the tracks and
in the restaurant across the street
veterans of Patton's armies
and Topeka's wards
retreat
    from the headlight's empty stare.

Before dawn the wind forms rain
in darting rivulets on the glass,
soon the yards will be
a sea of grey
around the shining rails.

This is not the place of plastic padded
electric controlled babbitts
from College Hill,
not a reflection in the peddler's eye.

"Coffee all the way around,"
for the heroes of the cattle pens
and packing houses
while boxcars are being switched,
returning like our lives
and then back out
to the North Sides
at the end of every line.

RETURN

Tom Page

"You drive," he said
taking his grandson on his lap,
and following the black hearse
I traveled several decades
up Hillside through Wichita,

She was buried there
her brother standing nearby
in 1938 holding me in his arms
as I watched another time.

OSAGE COUNTY STATE PARK LAKE IN THE FALL OF 1971

Tom Page

Before we found jobs in Topeka, and later
on Saturday, her day off, we would take the
two dogs and drive south to the lake,
34 and 19 are wonderful years to be in love,
and the eastern Kansas countryside was in love
with us, and still is.

Now we want to take our child there next year,
now that he is born,
to show him the place of our love.

Some days while she was working,
I went alone to the lake
with thoughts of the past
remote and recent
hopeful and remorseful
walking into those
images that we carry around
but are seldom evoked,

On those days when she could go
with me, though,
reality became immediate,
and the eastern Kansas countryside
let us forget and then learn
to give life to our love.

BIRTH POEM

—For Gabriel Gibson Fleming: Born! a son—

Gerald Fleming

1

You begin your journey before the sun,
the death of the night, 4 a.m.
on this 17th day of June in 1974
when the tilted vessel of the moon
has spilt out Venus and precedes it
toward the west.
6 o'clock: your universe
phones the doctor: he says wait.
Late two weeks, can you feel
the ache of the animal
city lumber to life, the river of its
noise find its groove and flow, the pain
in the pit of the belly again begin?
Universe and I go back to bed.

2

1 p.m. Reticent one: are you afraid? Does
the journey take you or you the journey? We

are in a dark place now, a hollow place howling
with orders. I looked down to sign
some papers, she was gone, & now they tell me
I must stuff this empty chair through the thirty
minutes of her preparation: the womb
closes down around you like a fist, that face
my wife my love your universe tightens,
there is fear, synaptical practices
for bravery: I am not there.

3

And now I am there and she
is halfway there: 5 centimeters, shackled to space
by time, and small one, you move some
middlewhere
between these hands of mine spread like birds
above the writhing, stretching globe. She
who has never known the inside of a hospital
comes to know its bowels: pale in a white
wrinkled gown on a porcelain toilet
after the enema. Wails of hungry infants
skitter down the walls.

4

Original sin: you are making your
mother cry. With such legacy
we begin.

Still you are the object abstract,
the dark unstill cause of this
distention, the form of rumor
in the opaque auqarium.

5

I write. She is in the bathroom. 6 p.m. 8cm. We need 10. The doctor comes humping down the hall clump-tap-clump on his old war injury — since that night, that spear of light in the bunker, he calls all pain evil. His evil: there is pain here — he wants to give a shot. Gerry says she prefers not, for the Irish nurse has whispered in her ear that sleep may come at birth. The woman in the pain of life says no to oblivion. O but the doctor is ringmaster; his lioness misbehaves; amazed, he takes 3 centimeters away, & tells us we're only half-way, have five or six hours to go and he goes — to dinner. With such support we curse the mountain in the clouds: we know they are clouds, we are here, we are drenched, they have rained on us like poison.

6

Trembling body,
ragged muscles past, far
past the limit of fatigue & bad frontiers,

the wild & new & unrelenting being moving
down,
Gerry is ready for delivery.
10 p.m. Push!
Push! 11:30 I am the guest, ready,
the nurse invites me in to watch. Push!

Child: the road goes thin for our growing.
Loud and coarse, sometimes the crowd must shove
the traveler to some newer thoroughfare. You
won't come out: big head stuck at the end
of the tunnel, I have heard your heart, it races
like a thousand ball bearings falling to the floor,
the doctor goes in to get you: what I thought
were forceps were not like these.
These are like shovels! In with the shovels,
out with the head. The head has hair!
A blink and there comes the rest of the body!
Dark-headed white fish! Swimmer in white waters!
Choker on air! Traveler storied with clots
of the journey!
Boy-child! Stranger boy! *Gabriel!*
Bawling squalling trumpeter! Welcome here!

You who sputter & cough & take unction
of nitrate & umbrage at the machinations of
suction, you who in your first minute of new birth

snatch the idle oxygen mask & slap it to your face,
you who had his mother do what mothers must
to be,
who had his father scrub the life-dirt off his hands
to hold you, to calm you (thank you) welcome!
You have cried out for life!
She has cried out for life!
How I cry out for your life!
We are new!
Life! Life! Life!

A CANTICLE

J. Mangen Ellis

Head for the light
for the sight
for the mind in the heart
in the part of the sane,
for the way
for the day of the spring
in the flowers,
in the rain,
in the grass,
in the freshness of morning,
in the brightness of noon,
in the mountains and the plains,
in the deserts and the oceans and the rivers
in the faces of the children,
in the faces of the old,
in the willows by the creeks,
in the kindness where we find it,
in the depths of life behind it
in the men in the women,
in the earth in the earth in the earth in the earth
on the earth on the earth on the earth
in time, in place, in valley, in love,

in gentle gentle gentle love wherever
wherever it will grow in fields,
below skies below clouds
below heavens anywhere
anywhere it will answer you
answer you answer you
and me and me and me
and you and you and you
in countries everywhere speaking
speaking where one is listening
listening listening...

THE DAYS OF A YEAR

Hervey White

Sunday, January 6, 1895
Rome. 5:30 P. M.

ITTLE has happened in the last three days. Thursday I spent in the Campagna; Friday in churches and in my room for it was a rainy day; and yesterday I was in the Palace Rospigliosi to see the ceiling fresco of Guido Reni, that is justly so famous. The skies cleared after noon and I went out for a walk from the "Porta del Popolo". I explored all the highwalled lanes that wind around between the villas, and finally getting clear of them I climbed out on a hill overhanging the Tiber and sat for an hour watching the sunlight on the snow of the mountains. The air was raw like March, and the wind helped to convey an aura of spring.

Today came clouds and rain again. I found a profitable morning, however, in the National Gallery of modern art. It was like being in a Boston

gallery again, except that the marbles and bronzes were much more numerous. Many of them were very good, but it is plain that the artists here are worshippers of the commonplace. They seem to think they must tell a story in their groups or pictures. They had best leave that to the novelists. In this they could take lessons from the art of the early Greeks.

There are two marble heads in this Gallery titled 'Sisters of Charity', yet they are sisters of men surely and it is a noble work of pure art. If it could only be buried somewhere, then 'discovered' again by an archeologist, how the professors and critics would rave over them. Notice that I give the professors and critics credit for knowing a good thing when they see it. Of course they themselves do not claim to step out of their idle world of knowing into an active one of doing. Perhaps it is well for them and the world of art that they remain where they are.

Another thing that I was pleased to see was an appreciation in some paintings of the beauty of railroads and railroad scenes. The shining rails, the long level stretches and vistas, the smoke and noise and hurry of our own land have not yet appeared on the canvases of American painters. It is curious that it should be felt and expression attempt-

ed here in Italy where all would be expected to run indolently to history and pastoral. Still the attempts here can only be considered as attempts; America will evoke the artists of the machine age. They will come, and they will furnish body for volumes of notes among professors of two thousand years hence, two thousand years being the most seasonable period for the steeping of enthusiasm into the noddle of a first class university professor.

As the rain came again this afternoon, I have spent the time with my diary, my stove and my dreams. This evening I have plans for a story which arose in my thoughts this morning.

Monday noontime, January 7, 1895

Showers and cold again today. I have not left my room and am fortunate in having a good supply of provision. I have spent the morning in singing and cleaning my room, with various digressions given to my stove and to the open front window which overlooks the activities on the street below. I also made removable the curtains covering the glass in my door that opens onto the roof garden. This door faces east and the window in it is very large so now I shall have more

of morning sun to warm my floor and walls. Why had I not thought of doing this before? Probably because I am usually out of my room on sunny mornings and had not noticed the possibilities.

I have a kerosene lamp now, too, which enhances my room both day and night. It decorates the marble-top table beautifully, and the white milk glass globe removed makes a center piece between my water bottle and the blue grass pepper-shaking candlestick on the shelves.

I think the stove must be doing very well, for while walking about to warm my feet and keeping my hands in my pockets, the Signora Julia came in to change my pillowcases and she at once joyously assured me the room was warm and comfortable as could be. On being pressed, she admitted there was a little gas in the air, but not enough to make any difference.

The pillowcases here are not made long at the end as in America, but barely meet over the ticking and are tied with four bows of white tape. It is washday today and a neighbor-woman of Signora Julia is now hanging up clothes on the roof-deck outside. It is a cold huddling life at best with Italians in winter. I try to tell them sometimes of American stoves, but I see my eloquence is wasted. They struggle to imagine but there is

nothing here to suggest such comforts. They have great respect for America, however, and I am often told that America is become the teacher of Europe in many ways.

When I speak of the general feeling toward Italians in America, the porter comprehends the situation at once. He is well informed. When he mentions the Italian government he obviously is aware of the state of affairs here, but he seems resigned to them, and makes no effort to improve things himself.

"Crispi is the prince of thieves," he always says. "And the king is an imbecile. But the poor always must pay the tax and support the rich."

"Why don't you get rid of your corrupt politicians? You have the votes."

"My way is to let things alone," he responds. "My politics and my religion is to be honest, of a good heart and attend to my own affairs."

I think this a common creed in Italy, not a bad creed either, if there were only as good a creed among the politicians.

Rome. January 11, 1895 9 P.M.

I have been here a month in Rome and it rains and it rains. Yesterday, however, the sun was

shining. I spent the morning in the Lateran church and all its lilac beauty came back to me as before. Looking at the color of the transept, I saw there was almost no lilac color, yet there is a lilac effect. I discovered this comes from a mingling of the light blues with the beautiful pinkish red of the draperies in the frescoes. Then the marbles that bear up these frescoes lead to lilac light, and the rich colors in the roof shout it forth joyously. Truly it is a wonderful work.

Strangely enough when I went into this church one feast day some time ago and the people were jostling and shuffling, I said to myself: Why did I ever think this church beautiful? Since then I have learned better than to look at a church when it is filled. To see a few priests and worshippers lends life and meaning, but only a few, not more. Besides, to feel the power of a church, to feel the power of anything beautiful or sublime, one should be alone. Or at least not with any one who is not humbled by the harmony. Otherwise you will only chatter and blaspheme, you will only admire yourself for the bright things you are saying or the knowledge you are displaying. You will not in any way truly see what you care to see, you will not even truly see yourself or your friend.

In the afternoon I went to the National Library for the first time. How much like old times it was to sit at a table there, feasting with mild eyed somewhat rustily dressed brothers, all of us bending over our books, each of us far away with his own interests, thinking out his own future as joined with the future of others and thus influencing the futures of all who are to come after us.

I think readers are the same the world over, at least readers of serious things, student readers they may be called. And I was in the room of serious readings, with the best literary periodicals in all the languages.

Today began with a blue sky, but alas, that soon paled and sickened and by nightfall a dead heaviness set in. The rain began again with the darkness.

January 12, 1895

All Rome is basking in the sun. The sky is cloudless; the air is warm and balmy. I seek a flight of stairs ascending somewhere to a square that faces south to sit in the radiance until the last month's chill is thoroughly driven away. I know such a flight of steps on the North side of the Piazza of St. John Lateran and to these I go to join with other Romans in the effulgent sunlight.

How Roman the entire prospect is! In the facade behind us are some old mosaics. We need not turn to look at them in order to enjoy them. The knowledge of them there will quite suffice. Some of the reclining beggars nearby can see them easily for they lie on the backs staring upward.

The level gravelled plain extends in front of us till it reaches the city walls. Today the ruined arches and towers form a very pleasing boundary, we do not care to know what lies outside of Rome. The right end of our square is walled by the fine facade of the basilica itself. To the left the plain stretches away to another church.

People are flocking around an orange man who is doing a thriving business selling three peeled oranges for a cent. Old women come by selling roasted chestnuts.

Groups of white-capped soldiers and occasional officers, resplendently uniformed, pass by. We know there are many things to say against this military system, but we will not say them today. We will accept all that we see here in the warming sunshine.

Black-garbed flocks of priests too mingle amongst us and we wish well along with all the other baskers. Let them expand in their idleness as they may.

Along the row of tenement houses to our left the poor are taking benefit as well as pleasure in the reviving warmth of the sun. Their crates of macheroni are everywhere drying in the streets and their linen is whitening all the window sills and fences and bushes. These poor people have been washing and mixing and shivering during the past cold wet days, but now what could be more luxurious than standing out on their street watching the drying? What matter if they are poor and ignorant? There are only passing days of happiness, with hope of others still to come. Walk in the sun without your old and tiresome questionings.

Everywhere the rising ruins of walls and arching aqueducts speak of the dead and the past. Even to be a mote of dust from the vanished dead must be a pleasant state in this glowing radiance and with this blue air to float in. Just a mote of gleaming dust with other motes for companions, afloat in this golden radiance.

The booths and merry-go-rounds beyond the Porta Maggiore have only a drowsy trade. Many are closed till evening, but one has its hand organ going and people are strolling in to see the wonders of the Calabria earthquake vividly portrayed. Each pays a cent to see it. Some surely pay the

last cent they possess. It shows a faith that the sun will continue to bless us and help us overcome the poverty and damp of the past.

In the parks the benches are filled with sleeping men and knitting women. Swans emerge from the water and plume themselves; their moulted silken feathers fleck the banks with softness.

Along the streets the orange women are companionably gossiping. Why worry if there are few sales today? School boys are idling on the corners. At half-past three I wander to the Pincio Gardens where fashionable Rome gathers to hear the outdoor concerts.

On entering that genteel park a thin mist seems to drift over the sun. Gaily dressed dark-eyed nurses, with bright skirts and streaming ribboned headdresses, shepherd and tend their charges. The nurses are tall and beautiful, their faces warm and intelligent, but they are servants. Uniformed coachmen stand stiffly in the gathering, but they are servants too and they cannot even speak to one another. Among the fashionable chattering groups there are a few thoughtful faces and a few beautiful faces and very many well preserved ones. How much credit is a well preserved face when there has never been any care to fade and to furrow it? The sky is gray with clouds by five

o'clock; it is raining again at nine. If I had not gone to the Pincio but had stayed with the poor in the Square, perhaps this day blessed by the sun would have left a better effect and I would have brighter hopes for the morrow.

January 13, 1895. Rome

I walked out from the Porta Pia this afternoon to examine more closely the ruins of modern Rome, the long rows of unfinished tenement houses. I had been among them once before, but darkness had come on before I had gained an idea of the extent of this wilderness.

I have seen nothing more mournful in all the dead cities of Italy than this ghastly one that has never known any living community. Modern tenement houses are at best saddening things, animal cages they are. But at least with people living in them they are lent a human warmth and significance.

Walking down these wide barren streets, unworn by cart wheels, and along the gravel sidewalks as fresh as the worker's roller left them, and viewing these barren rows of soulless houses, one is startled by the echo of one's own fearsome foot-

steps. It is a ruined section of Rome of which the guidebooks tell nothing. I walked for more than an hour in this uninhabited area, yet did not explore it all.

And everywhere the waste and wreck of it. Some of the rows of buildings are well finished; the stucco is pink and fresh; panels, balconies, and caryatids adorn the facades. In these even the windows were put in. In others, less completed, the window openings were left vacant or boarded up. In the tenements where windows were installed, the glass is broken and shattered by stones thrown by boys and they look more desolate than those with only blank openings. Except for the scattered few with boarded up window spaces, the rooms within the tenements are open to the weather. And on floor above floor of these you can see the decorated walls and ceilings bright and modern for tenants who never entered. Then nearby will be a block without timbers or stucco, fleshless, lifeless, grim and ragged in the whistling wind; long walls of idle windows or vacant sockets where windows were meant to be and never were. I walked past ruins where only the first or second story was completed; others where the foundation bricks were half laid in the mortar, or lying where the carrier piled them. And in some

places there were only the cellar excavations where the intended basement was meant to be.

Most of these tenement blocks however are completed and a wanderer has the feeling of being in the streets of a deserted modern city. Only the street lamps, the letter boxes, the signs, the house numbers, street names and the thousand minor and usually unnoticed things are wanting, making the place lonesome and mournful. At some corners there are blanks on the walls for a nameless street. And over the doors are blanks for the street numbers of the tenements. No addresses had ever been given for friends to come and visit or for letters to be sent.

In some of the buildings homeless people have tried to fix up some of the rooms and make them serve as shelter. There are a few chairs and a table inside and curtains on the windows. But even these homeless wanderers seem gone, leaving behind just signs enough of habitation to tell what the city was intended for, and what it can never become. In one place, though, a family seemed to be staying and a dog rushed out and barked loud and savagely at me though I was in the middle of the street and it was open day. I had been here before at twilight and lost my way in the darkening empty streets. I could imagine then what

horrors the darknesss might bring, but I shall not try to imagine them again.

Across from one of the longest of these blocks some poor homeless wretches have built some little huts of thatch and boards in the excavation for a houseless cellar and there, with improvised comforts have made their homes; the one oasis in this aborted desert. Still I think they must turn their eyes ever to the open fields beyond when they look from their open doorways.

Hurrying on and southward I came to what was to be the centre of this city. Broad flagstones form the sidewalks, the central street is smoothly paved, a park is begun to be planned, and then suddenly the flagging and paving and park and the branching streets together all end in banks of mud. This is not far from Porta Pia and there I returned into the living city having spent time enough in the lifeless one — a lifelessness which is not death but seems some hopeless insanity instead.

What a ghastly mockery it is out there on the plain that might be fruitful. What a pitiless caricature of our much praised supply and demand! It is the hollow skull and bones that marks the poison of a system where production is for profit instead of for use. When men shall learn that they are not wreckers preying upon each others help-

lessness and misfortune but that they may be brothers working each for all and for self together such waste may cease to be.

January 14, 1895. 9:30 P.M. Rome

Sun and blue sky with warm spring weather. I walked outside the walls of Santa Agnese and after two hours in that most beautiful basilica I began to think of plans for the remainder of the day.

As Baedeker speaks of the dome in the neighboring church of Santa Constanza I hunted up the sacristan and went in to see it. I was doubly disappointed. It was a large dome and shallow as I had desired and moreover it had no lantern at the top. Except the painting which here was worthless it was my ideal dome and yet it was far from being satisfactory. I thought of the roof of a band stand in some country seat park in America. I tried to imagine good painting and still it was not beautiful. What was the matter with my ideal dome of a few days ago? One thing this was overlighted by great staring windows in the drum. Again it was not on pendentives but rested like an

inverted wash basin square on the ugly pillars. I find that many, many things are needed to make the perfect dome and yet my ideal lives more vague and longing than ever and not a whit less beautiful either for all its disappointment.

Two German ladies had been in the church at the same time with me and while talking with the sacristan about the neighboring school they asked if they might visit it. Consent was readily given and we all moved out together. Now I too had been glancing into an open door where rows of children were sitting and my curiosity returning impelled me to follow these ladies into the schoolroom by the gateway. We learned from the sacristan as we were crossing the court yard that the school is kept up by the Pope and the children are from families of the poor.

The master made us welcome in the good old fashion, bowing, smiling, fetching chairs, and suspending all operations in our honor. I think pedagogues must be the same the wide world over. Here he was as if he had been in America, bright, middleaged, nervous, speaking rapidly and concisely with the air of one who is used to giving commands; with egotism enough to feel that he is running over with valuable knowledge, with real love for the imparting of it; with real love

too for the boys who are to receive it. Worn shiny garments, trousers hopelessly bagging at the knees, a cheery rubbing of the hands, a knowing pursing of the eyes and mouth that cause the radiating wrinkles to chase each other like lightning over the beaming visage, all this and much more was the genial little host who was entertaining us. There was an assistant at the other side of the room but he could never be a master, that was plain, he was too sullen and glum. Both men wore their hats though the master's was more like a cap and seemed to belong rather to the profession than to be one of those coverings that should be removed on the entering of a classroom.

As for the sixty small boys they sat in long rows of desks and pretended to be thinking of their books though in reality they were thinking all the time what great and handsome people had come to see them.

Two boys were standing at the master's desk for punishment, I suspect, though it seemed their office was that of caryatides for the master's hands as he leaned over the desk rubbing their heads affectionately. They took this caressing stoically enough; after all they were there for caryatides and were not being disciplined at all.

Then the master called little five year old

Paolino up to read for us. The shy urchin put out his best voice and read bravely all about the naming of the different parts of the body.

"Now—" says the master, triumphantly "we will see if he understands what he has read."

And brown little Paolino is made to point to his ears, his eyes, his nose, his everything; with the master becoming more and more hilarious at each success. When asked to designate the trunk, Paolino rubs his stomach so cunningly that we all laugh together as if we were of the same family and he the much worshipped youngster. Then the master becomes very serious.

"What is it that grows on the chin?"

Paolino puzzles silently.

"Wait" says the master, running over to him. "Feel, feel, what is that?" and he rubs his own bristly chin against the child's smooth cheek.

"Oh, beard!" says Paolino and we applaud the child's precosity.

"Bravo, Paolino. Bravo! bravo!" says the master as Paolino goes back to his seat.

The master returns to his desk and to his caryatides, then calls an older boy up who hurriedly reads to us of the distribution of the races. Afterwards more practical examples follow. Three urchins are called up by the excited master, one

with red hair, one with brown, and one with black. The reader is asked to distinguish, while the visitors sit in judgement.

"Manuelino has red hair."

"Right," says the master. "But ah, he has a smutty nose, too."

Out comes Manuelino's blue handkerchief.

"Oh, it is ink! Look at his dirty hands!" shouts the master.

Deep into the pockets go the telltale hands and shamefaced Manuelino gazes steadily at the floor. But the master hugs and kisses him into humor again; he kisses all the boys; we thank him heartily, shake hands, say farewell and leave the school to its interrupted humdrum routine.

Out in the street again I walk through the town countrywards. I purchase some bread and fruit at a shop then glancing into a basement I see a cobbler working. I have a shoe that needs mending so I step in and sit down while the torn sole is examined. The shoemaker is getting old now, but he chats away quite cheerfully. We are friends in a moment after I tell him that my father, too, was once a shoemaker. I tell him where I have just come from.

"Oh, you have been to visit the school? That is the school of the priests." The shoemaker hates the

priests as he hates Crispi. "They are all impostors," he says excitedly. "All of them."

The shoemaker has travelled much and is well informed. His daily paper is on the bench. He knows the cities of Italy well. He was in Mexico's capital working for an Italian theatrical company when Maximillian was killed. Glimpses of the man's life unfold while he repairs my shoe. His wife is dead but he has a sixteen year old son in Rome, attending a school and preparing himself for a mercantile life. His son had hoped to study medicine, but that was too expensive. We must do what we can in this world, not what we want to do.

When the shoe is mended I wonder if he will overcharge me and mentally conclude that while the work is not worth more than twenty cents I will pay thirty if he asks me.

"How much?" I say.

"Five cents."

It would be an insult to offer him a gift.

"Good bye."

"Good luck."

I am off on my foot-journey again. Across the street a new sign is being put up:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL — BOYS AND GIRLS.

So the parochial school is to have a rival. And

the shoemaker's influence will be with the new school. This little neighborhood has its divisions the same as any other.

The plain and the distant mountains are very beautiful. I cross into a field and finding a stone for a seat make myself comfortable to eat my lunch. As I am finishing a shepherd comes up to tell me that the dogs are dangerous at yonder house and I had best go around them. I give the remainder of my bread to him for his own dog, but he puts the bread in a pouch and does not give it to the dog. He is an intelligent looking man and his long sheepskin coat is primitively handsome.

"How much do you make at herding?" I ask.

"Very little. It is a poor business — two dollars a month and my food."

I know what their food is and remain silent.

"Is it better in America?" he asks.

"For Americans who know the customs it is but for strangers who know nothing of the ways, I think it is better here. There are many Italians in America who can't find work, even at the lowest paying jobs."

I tell him of the conditions as I tell them all.

"It is so always among the poor," he says with a slight smile.

While I am wondering if it was bitterness or melancholy in that smile which made it so painful to me, he is talking of his home in the mountains, of how he is going back in the spring to work in the fields again. And he is asking me, of course, the price of wine in America.

"I don't know. We drink little wine in America," I answer.

"Ah, yes, you Americans drink beer."

How can I make him understand the drinking customs in America when I have not seen a drunken man in all Italy?

"Why should it be forbidden?" he asks in wonder, as they all do, and I wonder myself, till I think of home again, and then I try to explain.

"We are different from you, I don't know how, but still we are different."

We say good-bye to one another and I wander on, stopping in a church on my way home.

And now another of my days in Rome is ended.

(To be continued)

Love Engenders Eternity

Yes! O yes!
for only love needs eternity—
nothing less could ever appease love

— Transcribed from an anonymous dialogue

DAYS AND NIGHTS

— A DIARY —

Richard Solly

March, 1973

I am finally settled. I have burned some of the earlier volumes of my diary which is something I now regret.

I have so little faith in my senses. I must learn to put more trust in them. They will lead the way. One night, after rereading all the old diaries, I felt there was nothing in them but failures, pretensions, and, above all, a childishness of emotions. But I am beginning to see now that as one lives and grows, there is a shedding of old selves and often the reaction, from guilt or fear, is to disown them. I symbolically burned them. One must come to an acceptance and understanding of all the different selves.

I am living in an apartment house belonging to Ted and Lora. They are both sensitive persons and fine musicians. Although they have given up their

professional careers, they have preserved the delicate sense of music in themselves. Ted, who is now sixty-three years old, conducted the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Lora played the piano in conjunction with many orchestras. They are colorful people, receptive and playful and open to others. I live in a small one room cellar apartment adjoining their basement. I have everything I need: seclusion, a large oak table for my writing, beautiful pictures on the walls, my table covered with cloths I bought in a second hand store; and finally, I have my books and papers all together in one place. In exchange for my cellar room I have a few custodial duties; and for all other work I am to receive a small supplementary pay.

While installing phones here, Jerry got talking with them about their complex of apartment houses. (They also own two neighboring houses!) They needed someone to help with the custodial and maintenance work. Jerry mentioned me to them and told them that I was a writer and in need of a job and a place to live. I suspect Jerry was getting tired of me living with him in his small apartment. I called them on the phone and visited with them. We talked for about an hour about books and music and only shortly before I left did we discuss the details about work, pay

and a room. They told me about a person they had taken in once before to help them with the work around the houses — a young man from Guam who came to St. Paul to study for the priesthood in a seminary just outside the city. The young man simply packed his bags and came without considering for a moment that the seminary might refuse him. He arrived at the seminary in the middle of the night and was told they could not take him in. There were certain procedures to be followed. He wandered about St. Paul for some time. Ted found him sitting on his front lawn one evening. They talked and he stayed here in the cellar apartment for two years.

This story made me feel more at ease.

Running below the three apartment houses, interconnecting them, there is an underground tunnel. I come in and out of my cellar apartment through the tunnel. I am almost sealed away from the world where I now live. I have no phone for anyone to call me, nor a doorbell for anyone to ring. However, since I am quite alone here in St. Paul it really doesn't make much difference that people cannot easily contact me.

I feel quite out of place amid such affluence.

Ted took me upstairs to show me the attic. While I was looking through some old newspaper

clippings I saw Ted crawl into a corner where there was barely enough room to stand.

"Come here, I'll show you something."

He lifted a hatch opening onto the roof and I followed him up a small ladder. I suddenly found myself on top of the roof with a panoramic view of the entire city. Ted became so excited he was almost dancing on top of the roof. We then both propped ourselves against an incline on the roof and talked.

There are so many beautiful things in these mansions: skylights of vibrant colors, exotic pictures in the attic, an alabaster statue of Ceres, beautiful wood floors and bannisters, variegated marble table-tops, hallways, tunnels — and so many, many doors. And Ted and Lora always have intriguing stories to tell me about tenants who have lived here.

What will come of all this. Will I return to Wanda?

I often think of the tunnel when I am returning to my apartment or about to go out from it. And when I pass through the tunnel I always have a deep feeling of entering and departing. I think of the tunnel as symbolic of the penumbra state of life where I strive to live; but, most often, I fail to achieve that sublimal state of con-

sciousness. Usually I am too much in the world or too much out of it. I wish for, strive for, and dream of a balance. The balance is unfathomable.

Today, I worked vacuuming the landings and the stairways which is part of my duties here. It took me three hours. Living in this mansion seems like living in a fairy tale. All the doors, the beautiful pictures on the hallway walls, beautiful rugs, mosaic windows and the labyrinth of corridors and foyers; walking through one doorway and suddenly finding oneself in another area on another stairway! It is so immense! At times I am afraid of getting lost in the house. I do get lost. I suddenly find myself in the wrong hallway, going through a maze of confusing doors. Often I become afraid of meeting someone while so confused about where I am—afraid to have them know that I am lost in this house.

One becomes a writer almost accidently. One spends so much time reading and writing, uncertain about one's own direction, when, through a mysterious transformation, all the words become flesh and the young artist is born.

Bachelard: "But in great poetical successes the problem remains intact; how can a man become a poet in spite of life." How does one purify one's life?

While reading tonight I suddenly heard a loud crash outside my window. I went out to investigate and there was Jerry. He had knocked over a trash can.

"Did I ever have a difficult time finding you. I couldn't remember which of the houses you lived in. I came around back of the houses and finally saw a little spotch of light from your basement window. Then, when I went to tap on your window, I knocked over the garbage can — it's dark out there."

Jerry has that much difficulty on the outside of this place; one can imagine the difficulties I am having on the inside of these houses. But Ted and Lora are very sensitive people and know I am still confused and awkward here.

I oscillate between joy and sadness, the poetic and the worldly in a matter of hours. How to find the deep wellspring that flows endlessly.

Anytime anyone speaks from the very depths of his heart, others will find them mad, innocent, or childish. It is their misunderstanding.

When one is deep into the interior flow of oneself, the exterior things, places, streets, names often become fog-like. I find myself lately in a great deal of absentmindedness and confusion.

There are separations and fractures within

one's being. The struggle is to overcome them. To live fully in life, without the fears and the guilts, and with the heart and senses open to others, caring. The separations can be overcome with joy and love and with faith and trust in the heart.

While I was typing up what I hope to be the last draft of the *Portrait of an Old Music Man* suddenly music fills my room. Lora playing the piano. The music lightens the room, gives it a glow. Music transforms the physical world and, as my music man says: "I can actually see it."

A month ago I left Missoula, Montana and found myself in the most severe holocaust of my senses. The pain unimaginable. I fled here to St. Paul with colitis. Afraid. Since my father was ill and in the hospital, I decided that I would go to Cleveland tentatively for a visit. I was frantic. Little money and nowhere to go. On the way I stopped in Greenbay to see Orville Clark. The pain was intense. Orville could say nothing. I could not open to him. I decided to stay in Greenbay with Kathy Giese since I felt to continue on traveling would have been disastrous. Kathy and I rode bikes most of the time during my stay there. Returned to St. Paul. There, waiting for me, were letters from Ken and Wanda. Letters of love and concern. I began breathing. The pain of

birth. How many more I wonder. The hope is for joy, for life and communion among people.

I am beginning my reconstruction.

Am I preparing myself for another death, nurturing another neurosis. What do I know now? But it is not death, it is birth. There must be numerous births in one's lifetime.

Valery: "When the ship of dreams run aground on the reefs of waking, Crusoe struggles to bring back something of value to the shore. He labors."

I watched a very interesting movie on the "monocle." A story of a young boy on an island and his odyssey. The young boy is heir to the leadership of his tribe. However he is frightened by a recurring nightmare of a shark devouring him under water. He is afraid and is subsequently ostracized by the members of his tribe. The boy flees his homeland, his island. Lost at sea for many weeks, he finally lands on another island. He begins to salvage things from the shore and starts building himself shelter. While exploring the land he discovers tracks made by some wild animal. He follows them. Suddenly, before him, is a wild boar. The boar attacks him but the boy slays the wild animal. The narrator of the movie comments: "Never again shall he follow such an animal's tracks. Now his path will be different." The

boy builds a boat, nurses a lame bird to life, and encounters savages who worship some demon god on the island. At last he returns to the sea to find his way home. "But no longer frightened. Now he is determined." Weeks go by without food or water. When he finally returns to his island no one recognizes him until his mother and father see him. He is welcomed as the new leader of the tribe. Around his neck is a necklace composed of the nostril bones of the boar and the teeth of a shark he had killed on the voyage home. The narrator concludes: "The story goes that it was only months later that the youth finally realized he had actually slain in life the shark that had pursued him in his childhood nightmares." — A romantic but illuminating hour on the monocle.

Often it seems that I could summarize all my diaries in one line. It seems that each diary is a theme in itself, each diary unravelling the theme or the motive or the river that at the time one is flowing in. I look back through one diary, the most recent one, and can summarize it in one word: humiliation. That word has become flesh. Simone Weil has said humility is the refusal to exist apart from God. I would say it is the refusal

to exist apart from the joy of life. I remember looking up the word humiliation in the dictionary to find its etymology. There was a quote from Donne: "Humiliation is the beginning of sanctification." Humiliation comes from a deep source in life, from a strong love of life.

Went to the nearby food Co-op. Some of Jerry's friends operate the store. They asked me if I would volunteer a few hours for one day a week and work in the bookstore they just recently opened. I accepted since the prospect of working in a bookstore sounded exciting. However the basement was cold and dank and only a few people came in all afternoon. Not many of the books interested me. Most of them were political, or second-hand books people donate simply because they are battered and hardly readable. However a few good books occasionally drift in that I can buy very cheaply.

I have done little work around the house. Still a bit uncomfortable here. Unsure. But Ted told me today:

"The work can wait. It will take a little time to get used to each other."

The last four days I have been writing feverishly as if I have tapped a deep well. Little reading and few sallies into the world. I am working.

My colitis is clearing up. I see now that it was all the frustrations, the tensions, the unnaturalness and lack of grace in my life. I held within myself a great deal of violence. I found no outlet for it and was unable to channel that interior force into constructive and creative work. There is a danger for those who don't find some outlet for the everyday violence and harshness. If it is not positively released, it will cause serious psychic harm. It is this interior violence that fuels and creates wars.

A man must free himself from the domination of the mother. The first image of the mother often remains fixed in one's psyche and we are attracted towards it like some mysterious allurement. One must free oneself from it before one can enter a flowing and loving relationship; otherwise the cycle is repeated endlessly. Repeating over and over, with one's wife or lover, the cycle we first had with the mother. We are either passive and subordinate to, or aggressively retaliating against, the bondage of the mother. To psychically or physically strike out at a woman is often an aborted attempt to shatter the fixed haunting image of the mother. The severing from the mother must be complete before one can begin to live harmoniously with another. Wanda was like my own

mother, strong, possessive and domineering. I sought her out. My father was passive and always demurely resisted. That is what I have always done. I have never been able to say no to Wanda, to assert my own needs when necessary. I passively resist like my father—a martyr. My father, too, had colitis and other internal disorders symbolic of a seething internal violence that does not find a positive expression. The harm is passed on to children, to friends, to other lovers. The cycle must be broken at its roots.

At times I think I know of a greater tragedy than Oedipus. In spirit I married my mother but have not killed my father. I detect his presence always.

But when one comes to understand one's own neurosis, one's own fears and guilts and their devious patterns, one is beginning not only the reconstruction of one's being but also of the very world. This constructive understanding will concurrently alter the world; imperceptibly and hopefully these interior changes will take form and the changes and the creative force will begin to manifest itself outwardly in the politics of our world.

It is my dream. The dream of the reconstruction of the world through discovery and healthy

development and growth of the interior life of individuals. They say this is the dawning of a new age where we will cease to live apart from joy and our love of life. We must cease to compromise ourselves in life. We must come out of our deserts. Rituals, mobility, festivals of learning and joy. Creating and living as children and as gods. Books are speaking of the dream. To give wings to the dream, to act and love in the world as full human beings, knowing, sensing, and creating. Joy is the only politics, the only hope.

But I wonder if this new age is a dream to be awakened from. We must strive for it with faith.

It is a matter of faith. But the presence of the new age of celebration of life in art is being felt. It is appearing. We must write, sing, dance, paint this new appearance, alter the course of despair and violence, as all artists do who see beyond these dark ages and help usher in and create a new era, a new direction in life.

There are many temperaments we reveal to others. One with the poet, one with our lover, one with the politicians, one with our friends, with other artists, with strangers.

I have a singular and unique temperament with each person I know. Each person draws from me a different aspect of my being. Some tempera-

ments are more natural than others. At one time these myriad of temperaments caused me a great deal of pain. It all appeared to be dissolution, dissipation. I felt there was no center, no true self, no core. But now I am coming to an acceptance of these temperaments and the multiple selves. I feel more centered.

I feel that I am moving towards the center — or I may be in just another hallway of the labyrinth. Although I am afraid to speak freely, afraid that my own inadequacies will be revealed, afraid to appear simple-minded to others, even with all the fears, I sense a growth within myself. A growing towards light. I am learning to write and live naturally, freely, honestly.

To live simply and fully is all I wish to do. I do not like to write about joy and the dance; I would rather be dancing joyously. I would like to write from an overflowing instead of desperation. "To become a work of art." The dream . . . when art has entered completely into life. To recreate one's life into artful and sensitive expression of one's being, the conscious body living as playfully and lovingly as children and working as men and women. The separations must be overcome in life, not in books.

How strong I am in the diary!

This afternoon, Lora and I were in the basement talking about the cat. We were trying to decide what the cat wanted with all its meowing. We opened the door thinking the cat wanted out. But the cat stayed at our feet mewing. We despaired trying to figure out what the cat was mewing for. As Lora started back upstairs and I back to my room, the cat, realizing that we were leaving, went back to its basket and laid down quietly. Lora turned around, laughed, and said:

"He thinks we're cats and that we're supposed to play with him."

Peter the cat is nocturnal. He roams about the house at night and sleeps during the day. At the very onset of dusk he begins mewing to be let out. Occasionally Peter comes in a few times early in the night. He sits on the outside of my basement window sill and mews until I let him in. He comes in and goes out through the window. He walks over to his basket for awhile, sits, then wants out again. I suspect Peter just wants to come in to see what I'm doing, despairs, and then wants to be let out again. And out my window he goes! Often, I go to sleep before he comes in for the night, but Peter will wake me up with his persistent mewing until I get out of bed and let him in.

The other day it gave me an eerie feeling when

I noticed the cat shadow he cast below him. I would use the cat as a symbol for guilt, but his very shadow — so elusive — is guilt.

Worked with Ted painting the outside of the house. Four hours: $8.00. Hallelujah! And now, on the wall above my writing desk, I have a copy of the painting *September Morn;* a painting that caused quite a stir in the early nineteen hundreds. She is a young woman standing by a pool of water, leaning slightly forward, nude, but very modest. Her breasts are small and it's difficult to tell whether she is a grown young woman or a girl. I got this reproduction from the attic where Ted and I were rummaging about today.

How fortunate I am. It seems as if I have an Athena watching over me. A clean room, a quiet haven, outside work, music, pictures and books. I have always been fortunate in housing matters. When looking for a place I go first to the garrets and cellars, for they are usually unoccupied and with a bit of work can become magic places to live in for they are the most oneiric rooms of a house.

In Missoula , sometime ago, I was desperately in need of an inexpensive place to live. A friend of mine, in jest, suggested the cellar of a huge gothic-type house where he lived. The cellar had never

been lived in before. It was cold, dank and very dirty. Spider webs hung from one end of the cellar to the other. There were no windows, only small glass squares that gave glimpses of the shoes of people passing by. The cellar was evocative of the most dismal opium dens. The first night I was there a girl from upstairs came down to see what I was doing in the cellar. When she learned I was planning to live there, she offered to share her place with me until I could find more habitable living quarters. But I undertook the reconstruction.

The landlord agreed to rent to me for $15.00 a month, although it was against the housing codes.

I began decorating it with the most pleasing things I could find: cloth, pictures, knick knacks. It was one of my finest creations. However the density of the darkness never seemed to be completely illuminated. The lights only seemed to illuminate spotches of darkness.

People often came over to see my much talked about cellar quarters.

David Thomas took over the cellar after I left. A year later, after he too had left, we both came back to visit the place. It had lost all its mystery and had taken on the appearance of a respectable basement apartment.

Later I found an unoccupied attic in St. Paul, again for only $15.00 a month. Another reconstruction from the dismal to the sublime. I called it my sanctuary aloft in the trees. Those days were spent dreaming, alone. And that attic is now being rented for $120.00 a month!

And now again I am in another beautiful cellar, in another oneiric house...

Harold's bookstore. The store almost looks like a large library room one might find in a mansion. Bookshelves line the walls and he has chairs where people can sit and read. Above the room there is a loft where he does his business work. There is a basement too where he keeps the rare books he collects.

One night while I was talking with Ted about Nijinsky I mentioned that I saw a copy of Nijinsky's Diary at Harold's bookstore which had been signed by Nijinsky's wife, Ramola. Ted told me Harold used to be a cellist in the St. Paul orchestra.

I said to Harold:

"I've been to most of the bookstores in St. Paul but this is the nicest one I've seen."

How he smiled! As if no one had ever said that to him before.

Harold inquired about my coat. It is a replica of a Civil War coat — a long, blue-gray cape with

a bright red underlining. I've noticed people look strangely at my coat when passing me on the street. I feel I am dressed for a banquet or a celebration, but those staring at me seemed in a gloomy, despondent mood. It created a sense of awkwardness in me. But Harold says:

"That sure is a nice cape you have there. You know they say Thomas Aquinas wore a cape just like that."

I laughed and we talked about the days he played the cello with Ted conducting the orchestra.

When one is sensitive and open to others, one is susceptible to the pain and regrets that ensue from others' evasions, their turning away from a merging or a meeting, their reluctance and lack of assistance to overcome the initial fumblings of meeting. Often they will turn and leave you mumbling to yourself like the dog with a stone in his mouth in Rilkes' *Encounter*. But the glory of the opened soul meeting another soul, opened and receptive! When such persons only pass one another on the street, it is a joy to be remembered in the darkest of nights.

Finally finished with the work I am going to send to *The Phoenix*. Tomorrow I shall run down

to the post-office and mail it — airmail! How glorious it is! My falls are deep because I soar so high in the skies. All could be rejected. It is my first attempt to publish. I could fall again but tomorrow, off to the post-office!

Today women are coming to an understanding of and amplifying the essential aspects of being a woman. I fear only those women who seek just a political equality with the power of men, a power that has been destructive. Such equality I doubt will further any discoveries. But now is the time for men to undergo a similar search for liberation, a journey into their own animus. What are men apart from the violence and insensitivity they still manifest in society today?

Just as women do, men too have an innate and unique psychical as well as physical strength and beauty. It is singularly masculine. Fire. I don't know what it is, but one has seen the destruction and cruelty of male society. It is a brutal force. Yet this same strength can be creative. What is the beautiful strength of men? I intuitively know the strength and beauty of women by its absence in me. I can sense better the love and beauty in women than I can in men. That, I suppose, is why I have always thought that simply because women are more beautiful than men, all hope in the re-

construction of our world rests in them. But men must step forward too, beautiful and strong.

April, 1973

Lora gave me Laura Huxleys' book *You Are Not The Target*—a therapy book on dancing, singing, breathing. A book that conveys a sense of life enriching and positive. A simple book to help fill the gaps. Psychology teaches one how to live in the world-with-others. Laura Huxley's book does this on a very simple level.

I went with some of Jerry's friends to a warehouse in Minneapolis to buy some books for the Co-op book store. While we were browsing through the shelves I found the beautiful photographic book *Kiss The Joy As It Flies* by John Pearson. I suggested it would be a good book to buy. The others didn't think so because it was so expensive. Besides they primarily wanted "political books." I managed to get them to buy the book by telling them if it wasn't sold within a week I would buy it myself. Back at the store I put the book on the front desk, hoping someone would take enthusiastic notice of it. And I wrote John Pearson a letter.

The book didn't sell. It had no "political merits." I bought it for myself.

While walking down Maiden Lane with its red cobbled bricks on this warm and windy day a sudden burst of wind surged and drew a pile of leaves up into the air, swirling them about like a whirlpool. Immediately Van Gogh came into my mind. I recalled some of his paintings I saw at the art museum in Chicago. And I recalled one of his letters to Theo in which he said that many painters have a nervousness in their hands that resembles a musical instrument. He mentioned a painter whose lines evoke a violin. The lines in Van Gogh's paintings make me think of drums. I thought of his bedroom at Arles. Why and how did those swirling leaves evoke such a surge of impressions from me?

The unconscious manifests itself in reality continuously through the imagination. One should pay close attention to what the imagination brings into sight. They are clues the soul releases. To sense and to be aware of the continual drift of the unconscious in daily life is very difficult. The repressions seem almost automatic, almost like a reflex.

How the lonely and fevered imagination can dissimulate people, turning beggars into wise sages, simple minded women into muses, poor people into kings and queens, rain into snow if it

likes to. Today I met a woman in the park whom I made to look like a fellow writer and artist, sensitive to all the nuances, with a slightly mystical insight into life; and her eccentricities I simply dismissed as indicative of her extraordinary sensitivity. But my imagination could not bear the weight of reality when I found myself sitting in an apartment eating dinner with a woman who had just recently gotten out of a psychiatric hospital. She had nearly spent two years there and was fanatically religious, with all the enslaving scruples.

Ted told me that Lora has been keeping a diary for fifteen years. How I would like a glimpse into it. Her life has been full of travels, artists, musicians, and listening to the music of so many countries. Lora is sensitive, gentle and pleasant. I only wish I could see her dressed to go to a concert as she appeared in the days when she was active in music. I can't understand how Ted and Lora abandoned their art. Pablo Casals and Andres Segovia are in their nineties, yet still devoted to music.

Met Jeane, a young woman who is a tenant here and a published poet. I was working outside her ground floor apartment for the past two days, painting. I had to paint the doorstep of her back

door and needed it open. I called to her through an open window. She opened the door and invited me in for coffee and a piece of cake. Her eyes never turn away from you. Deep blue eyes. We talked about her poetry and my own work. I was surprised to hear her talk about Robert Bly and Tom McGrath, two people I have become familiar with through *The Phoenix*. She is arranging a poetry reading with both of them and invited me along with her. She said Bly and McGrath would like me.

Previously Ted warned me of Jeane's crocodile tears.

"She is a weeper," he said.

She readily conveyed to me her loneliness, her struggle as a poet, her depression. She was in the midst of a relationship that was breaking down. I understand a self of Jeane's that Ted and Lora do not see.

She invited me to visit her again. When I did go back to visit, I first went outside and walked around the block, then entered from the front door of the neighboring house. I could have easily walked up the back stairs which I have access to from the basement, but I was afraid that if Ted and Lora saw me they would think I was siding with Jeane against them. There is a small war

going on between them and I am careful not to take sides. Most of the night Jeane talked to me about the problems she was having with her lover. There are many times when it is quite oppressive to talk with Ted and Lora. They are always talking about politics and both of them are professed atheists. It is an issue for them. Ted carries a vendetta against the Catholics, who did a great deal of psychic harm to him when he was young. So much talk about politics becomes depressing for me. There is such little dance in politics, so little humour and laughter. I often try to divert the conversation but I'm afraid they may become aware of my lack of interest in an area in which they are absorbed. So I ask questions and listen to what they have to say. Yet their talk about politics comes from a genuine and loving concern for people.

When Ted and Lora are talking about music I could sit and listen for hours, so illuminating they are. Ted said he would teach me how to play the flute. The flute is an instrument I have always wanted to learn how to play. It is solitary music, yet like all music it alleviates heaviness and drudgery and transforms the world with a richness and wonder.

To the intellect there is a aspect of childishness

in the emotions. We are afraid to reveal this aspect of our beings which has not grown "mature". The emotions causes embarrassment and fears of appearing simple-minded. But when one opens the heart, one finds trust.

I have written David Thomas two letters, but he doesn't reply. David has always attacked those who did not understand the arcana of words, those people who say: "Those are just words." David attacks and tries to force them to see; whereas I usually acquiece or secede. David always tries to tear away the masks. He suffers a great deal from guilt.

David called me his buffer. I am affable and conciliatory where David is aloof and often harsh; I am comic, David tragic. He said to me:

"We are each other's alter ego."

He had frequent outbursts of anger against the masks and the games people play, especially when he was drinking. Did I find in him my shadow, my shadow that wanted, but could not, react aggressively to individuals who did not understand the words and the flesh?

When we met Anais Nin in Greenbay, we both went through a strange transformation. I was unresponsive, aloof, and uncomfortably distant, rigid; David was amiable and even jolly.

Once early in the morning, we were walking along the street and in a fit of rage he wrestled me down to the ground.

Reading National Geographic: "... there was only one great continent, Pangaea, meaning 'all lands' and only one ocean, Panthalassa, 'all seas'." In science there is a redefining of concepts and profound discoveries that are comparable to the discoveries of Copernicus and Darwin. One scientist wrote a treatise and called it *geopoetry*. They are speaking of the eternal drift of continents, the births of seas, faults, islands born in the ocean from fire. They are beginning to speak less as staid scientists and more like children awed with life.

Is science finally coming to the threshold of that majestic door which artists and mystics have always known?

I continue to wonder what I have to say. I feel that as long as I trust my intuitions and follow the directions of my heart, I will grow and discover. My life has often been filled with a stiffness of living, an unnaturalness, a lack of grace, and a hiddeness that I abhor and has been the cause of my depression. That is what I struggle most to overcome, not with intellectual acumen, rather by rediscovering my roots of humanness and by

learning to live honestly and spontaneously with myself and with others.

I struggle to reach that point where there is no disparity between my work and my life. Rimbaud says: "La vraie vie est absente." I want to make life present, to elevate life into art. The truly human, the personal transforms itself into the myths.

The emotions and those moments of jubilation in life are always spontaneous in life. They are not rewritten and thought out. It is that flow in life I try to capture in my writing. I more often fail but I feel less and less the separation from my work. The balance!

The mask the novelist wears, although transparent to the reader, is still a mask that I protest against. It often reminds me of the masks children wear at Halloween. The masks were always difficult to breathe behind. In my work I want to conquer the feeling that one is only simulating life.

The arcana of words. The mysteries. The separations.

As a young man I would like record my diary, although I am lost in the labyrinth, confused and a bit fearful of life. But with faith and trust in the intuitive ways of the heart, I hope to find my

Ariadne thread. But the fear is that I will not continue to grow, that I cannot alter or change that which nearly destroyed me, the fear that I have nothing to say, that it is all quite insignificant. The fear of failure. Will the emotions be elevated to a creative force in life, transmitted into the myth, the archetypal, the collective?

June, 1973

I stroll up and down Summit Ave. There is a carnival in the street. Clowns, antique cars, confectionary stands, organ music, popcorn and red candied apples, women wearing colorful long dresses with aprons, a bicyclist with a black derby hat peddling a huge penny-farthing bicycle with its large front wheel and a tiny rear wheel. Everyone asks him how he gets up and down from the bicycle.

I talked to a painter displaying her work along the sidewalk. She asked me about my work. When I told her that I was a writer, she enquired:

"What do you write?" I replied "What do you paint?" We both laughed. She said: "People often ask me how long it takes me to do a painting. They want to see if the price for the painting is somehow justified by the amount of time I put

into it. It so exacerbates me, I just want to say I've been working on it all my life. I think I will."

There was a young boy selling minature terrariums trying to cash in on the carnival spirit. He had a small sign posted on a wrought iron fence bordering his front yard. One contracted deals with him through the fence like with a bank teller. As people passed by him he would shout a vivacious 'Hello!' hoping they would stop and buy one of his terrariums, small glass jars in which he had planted weeds. I stopped to talk to him. He asked me to guess his birth sign — and to give me a clue he enacted the movements of a crab on his front lawn.

M. Ester Harding in *Woman's Mysteries*: "The forces in the unconscious must be given due recognition no longer in stark opposition to the conscious attitude. If this peaceful revolution within the individual could be accomplished in a sufficient number of people, might it not be that a renewal of life, even in the whole of Western civilization, could take place without the necessity of passing through a phase of destruction and barbarism? For the revolution would take place within..."

The engendering of an exterior politics that flowers from the interior, an overflow of the un-

conscious that has not been repressed and seething with hatred and violence.

I am less governed by the frantic impulses to go outside myself, to lose myself in the exteriorness of the world. I sit for hours reading and writing, listening to music. I am at ease with myself, meeting casually with strangers on the street, not afraid to merge, less fearful of the emotional life, my own anima. I have less guilt.

At times, though, I detect an absence, a vacuity. When I was so desperate and in pain over the shedding of an old self of mine, a hysterical self, the pain of losing an entire past of familiar streets, taverns, friends and intimate moments shared with others there was a sense of emergency in my life, the incessant sirens of the ambulance, a foreboding sense of death, yet, it was my very birth. I felt intimately close to the mystery, divine mysteries familiar to holy men and women. I understood the unconscious and its flow. I saw behind people as if they were transparent. I saw people wading, splashing, diving, drowning, and playing in the water. I kept my vision on the water.

It was as if in that state of emergency and depression I was at the door of death, that infinitesimal moment before death where all the veils of confusion and ignorance are dropped to reveal the

great mysteries. That depression was akin to the moment before death, to fasting, yoga, the mantras of the East, the ghost dances of the Indians. But it was depression, unbreakable.

I lose sight. The sight returns in joy. I lose sight again. I find myself on reefs of sand and rocks, nowhere near the water. One is tempted to foray again into the dark nights, to fast, to chant, to dance, to summon the vision.

How to maintain the balance of poetry in life.

I often wish I could see a psychiatrist who was sensitive to the problems of artists. An Otto Rank. I wrote Dr. Chester Raphael in New York. He is a Reichian psychiatrist and I was hoping he could tell me of someone whom I could see here in St. Paul. He wrote a very terse reply informing me that there was no one in St. Paul qualified to do Reichian therapy.

I do not have any visible diseases. My neurosis is invisible; it is my hiddeness I wish to conquer. I have no fetish, no recurring nightmares that keep me awake nights, no phobias, nothing visible. No stethoscopes, X-rays, blood tests, thermometers, no scapel could remove it. An occult blood test would not find it! Yet is is inextricably woven in my being.

Downtown I meet with St. Paul's mendicants.

One man was of mingled black and white parentage, Creole, he described himself. We sit on the curb of the street. Mr. Creole, as I began calling him, says: "You have to be able to speak two languages and see both sides of the fence at the same time in order to get along in this world. One side is white and the other side is black, like me. I get along with everyone." He took me panhandling with him up the street. "Usually I don't panhandle on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Wednesdays. The best days are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Sunday, of course, is a day of rest." Mr Creole likes to instruct me. He stopped a young man on the street and asked him for money. He talked rapidly, gesticulating, free associating anything that came into his mind. He garbled incomprehensively over pauses and hesitations. And often, surprisingly, he elicited a few acknowledging nods from his clients. He told a young man: "Sonny—" (all the bums call me Sonny)" and I just came up from New Orleans early this morning and we haven't had any sleep or anything to eat All Sonny's been doing is reading that galldarn book of his. (I had with me Robert Bly's book *Sleepers Joining Hands.*)

Later Creole and I sit on the curb and drink wine. Whenever there was a lull in the conversa-

tion, he'd ask me to read my book. I read with a bit of histrionics but he wasn't very impressed. Yet he always thanked me for reading to him.

The bums are easy to talk with. They always look straight into your eyes, inviting you to stop for a moment. Of course their intentions are always to beg money, but once they realize I have none we all get along fine. No one saunters downtown except the bums and the very young people whom I meet most often on my walks.

I finally found a use for the pigeon feathers I find on the streets. I use them for book marks.

Feel that I cannot go through with those plans Wanda and I have made to rejoin each other here in St. Paul. The dreams of reunion. The idea of caring for Isaac, her two year old child, frightens me. The loss of a certain independence, financial problems, immense political problems that, alone, I would not have. Why before did I think I could become the father? Like the man who runs into the fire to save, to salvage, I promised her I would return. We both nourished a dream of reunion in our letters. I feel I have betrayed her, lost faith in the dream.

Am I repeating an endless pattern? Will I find another Wanda, another love, another failure? Can I alter that endless repetitive cycle?

Conversation and bicycle riding. Peddling up hill, speeding downhill, around brilliant corners, no hands, coasting. I like jugglers and clowns in conversation, dancers and histrionics, eloquent gestures, surprises, levity.

I seem able to dissolve the stiffness of consciousness for others. I listen. Ask questions. Often open and respond. When I see blocks in other persons, their suspicions, their sores, the sensitive areas of the psyche that interprets the other as a threat to their personal, their interior, I am careful. I often fail. I tire.

When people become conscious of me I often become afraid, afraid they will find me lacking. I make it come true. I often interpret people's silences as rejection or condemnation. But the fears are hallucinations of the psyche, like the child's in his bed at night envisioning a haunting apparition. The child evokes the demon. The demons arise from the child's fears, the child's darkness. I evoke my own demons when I am with people. Demons that judge, condemn, deride, reject, and mock. The demons are destructive and prohibit merging with another. But to name the demon, to call it forth, to turn on the lights for the child, to become conscious of it undermines the power of demons over us.

Thefts of magic. I stand at the bar of the Commodore Hotel, a bar that F. Scott Fitzgerald made famous with his drinking bouts. I watch a table of men and women talking. The men, wearing stuffy suits, dominate a conversation that ranges through business, law, medicine, politics. Suddenly their conversation runs dry and the silence at the table grows tautly extended. They are at a party, the women dressed in colorful raiments, perfume, wine! The men stare at the uncomfortable silence. They are waiting to say something intelligent. They are afraid to leap. Then one of the women speaks, sensitively, simply, and her supple words are like a magic wand that dissolves the tightness.

Everyone smiles and laughs.

The men begin to speak again, taking over the show; like clowns who steal from Faust his magic, they steal the magic of the women.

I open doors leading to other doors.

Glimpses.

Confusion in the labyrinth. If only I had someone with me, a fellow night swimmer.

It seems only seconds after I have spoken. I think of responding in a different way, as if I could go back in time and capture the essence of the moment with one word or gesture. I recreate

conversations and meetings into how I would have liked them to be. Later, I think of an inflection of the voice, a word, a gesture, the look that I should have given instead!

I fantasize great conversations with people and imagine extraordinary meetings. I must write the portraits of my dreams. The world would be amazed over the number of artists I meet in my fantasies!

July

I have greatly lacked confidence in my life. I always wanted to be the greatest clown, the greatest dancer, the greatest artist, yet in life I felt inferior. It made me hesitant to respond to people genuinely. I hid behind my mask and eclipsed intimate feelings with laughter. I felt that I was a shy and reticent person. Yet friends always thought me to be vivacious, humorous. I told Lora I once wanted to be a clown in the circus. She said: "Yes, I can see you as a clown." It is a mask that camouflages and dissimulates a shy self afraid to reveal itself. I struggle against my mask, not to lose the laughter and levity, but to bring to it seriousness and sensitiveness. A dream self of mine desired to become a tragic person. To give confidence and strength to a self afraid to reveal its delicateness and fears.

From a need to win approval and acceptance, with the mask of the clown — jovial, vivacious, humorous — I attempted to win approval and to impress people with "tricks". I became the buffoon. People laughed and liked me.

When I was fourteen I was sent away to a Catholic military school to learn latin, french, chemistry, physics and literature. I remember most of all the train rides back home to Cleveland from New York on holiday vacations. On those occasions, riding on the train home, I would pretend I was an orphan. I told people I met on the train that my parents died in a car accident and I was put in military school by my aunt. Often women would take care of me. Once two black women gave me whiskey to drink, offered me money, and said that I could stay with them. When we got to the station in Cleveland they met my "aunt" (my mother). I managed to keep the secret from everyone.

I oscillated between feelings of inferiority and superiority. No acceptance of the self.

I lied to myself in my diary. That desperate I was to live up to the image, the ideal, of my self.

I sought out a psychiatrist. I spent nearly a year with him. The psychiatrist wanted me to adjust to those very things I protested against —

school, work, and the surface reality of the world. The psychiatrist did not go deep into the unconscious patterns I had established that hampered me in life and in relationships with people. He looked at the exterior, the behavior. He wanted me to adjust and to accept the standard. I protested against psychology. I protested against its "unnaturalness" and formed a neurotic personality. Although negative, the protest was a strength. But one must go beyond protest, one must affirm to recreate the essential values of life.

Whenever Ted has time to idle he comes down to the basement, turns on the radio, sits in his favorite chair and reads a magazine. It has come to be a sign between us that he has time to talk about music. This afternoon's concert program began with the first symphony of Sibelius.

We sit for hours listening to the music. I usually sit on a stool across from Ted like a student. Afterwards he never fails to stress how inadequate the radio is — missing all the nuances that an actual orchestra gives to the listener. Very few people have a conductor like Ted to amplify and explain the subtleties of musical works.

During the music we listen in silence. It is the only time Ted and I sit across from each other silent. It is the music transforming the normal

reality. When Ted talks about the music he speaks with such personal depth that he sounds more like a poet than a musician. He uses the personal and beautiful language of the poets to explain and describe the music. I am utterly open and relaxed with Ted when he is speaking about music. We are both alchemists with words, eloquent, personal, revealing. Within the ambience of the music Ted no longer speaks about his vendetta against the Catholics, nor of politicians. His love for music and the years he played and conducted music dissolves his angers and he extols a beautiful celebration of music. His eyes glow!

The grounds in the rear of the apartment complex are a jungle. Green! Green! Green grass, green trees, green canopies of foliage, green reflections, green shades! The green is pervasive, bulky, sumptuous, thick. During the winter, from the rear area, one is given a sweeping view of the city. But now green foliage mantles the buildings and mutes the harsh sounds of the city.

A massive elm tree spreads its limbs like a great fan, extending an expanse of cool shade over the grass. And there is a Russian olive tree with greenish-silver tiny leaves; early in spring small yellow blossoms appear in the midst of its foliage. And a Sun-Burst locust tree with a yellow aureole

around its outer rim, like the bright light of the sun outlining clouds. The yard is an aviary now, a sanctuary for the birds. Warblings, coos, chirpings, trills, caws. Some birds singing in brief sweetness, others in sustained melodious songs. I watch two birds pursuing a moth flitting erratically in the air to avoid being devoured.

Talked to Michael Debbor, a tenant here, about Morocco. He said in Morocco they have a special name for madmen which, in translation, is akin to our word 'saint'. A Moslem legend says when Allah created the madmen, their minds were so beautiful that Allah kept them for himself, as one would keep beautiful jewels. So now, these men wander through Time without their minds.

One night I met Debbor on the front lawn. He was wearing an elaborate white latticed shirt. He told me about his work traveling to different countries, collecting items and artifacts for his shop in Frisco. He is here visiting. He has traveled to all the exotic countries one dreams of. He speaks about them delicately. When he talks to me he leans his head gracefully forward as if he were whispering secrets of Asian countries and their artifacts.

He took me to his apartment and showed me his treasure beads originally made by the Phoeni-

cians for trade. Long glass beads with decorative patterns and with exquisite colors. As I marveled over them he said: "Go ahead, take any three you like." He held the beads in his hand while I carefully chose three I liked best. He tells me how to wear them. He also gave me incense.

I think he is homosexual and these were his gifts.

One morning, when I was working in the back of his apartment, he invited me in for tea. Oriental tea. He prepares and consumes the tea as if it were a ritual. He pours out the entire pot of tea into five small oriental cups. He talks about the preparation of the tea: "Be careful not to let it steep too long." He shows me how to play chess with a Chinese set. Then we look at photographs of an old Russian town while we drink the tea. He plays the piano. His fingers are long, delicate, feminine. When he speaks his gestures are quiet and subtle. He directs his words with his hands. He moves his fingers as if he had a wand in them directing a slow and melancholic song. He has a collection of classical records. On his mantel all of Shakespeare's works are piled high. We talk about Iago and Othello.

One night I found him outside, holding a flower. He was wearing a round wide-brimmed hat.

When I told him he looked like a Mexican, he lifted up his feet and showed me his Mexican boots. He wanted me to give the flower to Lora. He said it was called a passion flower and that when it blooms its vividness lasts only a short time. It was the most beautiful flower I've ever seen. So many colors! So intrigued I was with the flower, I went several days later to the library to find some information about it. The flower represents the Passion of Christ. How ironic. Ted and Lora both abhor Christianity.

Michael always has such eloquent and exotic things: treasure beads, death masks, passion flowers, Chinese chess sets, the story of the madmen, and music. And during the past week I saw him in the back of his apartment working on a ship model built by someone in his family. He repairs the rigging, polishes and cleans the deck, replaces miniature life boats and tiny anchors. His fingers are suited for repairing such delicate things. They move with such precision, as if everything they touch are touched with the same concern and the delicacy he has for his treasures.

I rush out of my solitude for adventure, for the night encounter. It always happens. At the Commodore Bar, two women sitting in short dresses, very risque, with their legs crossed under

them and their panties showing, yellow and blue, seducing looks from men. I walked over to them. As they saw me approaching they glanced at each other, half cautiously. But they welcomed me, offered me a drink, and we talked for hours about Bergman's movies.

As the bar was closing, with people whispering to each other about what to do, men and women making arrangements for the night, the drugs taking effect, I encouraged the two women to continue on "till dawn". I suggest places to go. Jean refused outright. She was a mother. Sandra hesitated. She was not sure if she should go without her friend. She would be alone with me. I began to seduce her with roses.

"Come with me and I'll show you something you've never seen before. Thousands of roses, bright red roses! Many are open all through the night and have dew on their petals. Tiny, tiny little drops of dew all over their petals, flashing softly like brilliant jewels. Come on with me, I'll show them to you."

"You don't have any yellow roses?"

"No yellow roses. Only red ones with tiny globes of dew on their petals. After you see them you won't worry about anything."

I gently touched her arm.

She was afraid — and I couldn't convince her.

I was left standing outside the bar. It should have been raining.

Later I met Sandra again. She greeted me: "The man with the roses. Where are your roses?"

Me: "I have them with me, but you can't see them. They're invisible today."

She: "Come on over to our table with your invisible roses."

She began talking to everyone at the table about magic doors. She said: "I can open magic doors."

Me: "Can you now?"

She: "You don't believe me. Watch, I'll open a magic door for you. Close your eyes and imagine a color. What color do you like best?"

Me: "Blue, indigo blue."

She: "Alright, I'll open a blue door for you, indigo blue. Keep your eyes closed. Wait a minute. I see it coming. There it is . . . it's coming. A blue magic door! Open your eyes and take a look."

I open my eyes and look astonished.

She: "You're not looking hard enough."

Me: "My god, you're right. I can see it now. A blue magic door. You're a magician!"

She: "Well, go on. Open the door and go inside."

I make the gesture of going inside.

She: "Now it's your turn. Tell us what's inside."

Dalliance and seduction. Did my roses open her magic? My roses, her magic doors. One opens the other. Did my fantasy give her the courage to play, both of us like little kids in a grown-up bar.

Walked to the Cathedral. While making my way through the open parking lot across from the church I felt terribly exposed to the harshness of the world and at the mercy of people passing me on the street. The bums I talk and drink with downtown might see me going into the church. I glanced around to see if any of them were watching me. I wanted to be invisible. I felt a need to hide from them my delicateness, my need to go to the Cathedral and rest and sit in its hallowed space of mosaics, colors, marble and a somberness fit for my mood at the time. When I am depressed I go and sit in the Cathedral. I feel the world, the bums, the people on the street, Ted and Lora would deride this aspect of me. I hide my sensitive self from people. I hide my delicateness, afraid they will shatter it. I am hiding, concealing aspects of my being. To make visible all the selves. To come up from the underground. Consciousness need not destroy and inhibit graceful movement. It can

and does extol and enhance it. To glorify all aspects of the soul, to esteem them and not to be ashamed of them.

I am alone. I have no teachers, no artists, no intimate friends I can visit in the night. Today I worked outside on the foundation walls. I am repairing the joints between the bricks with cement, fortifying the foundation of the house. Me, a repairman.

The years of the wild horses are over. I apply the scorched earth policy. I cannot return to the past. Newness, new towns, new cities, new friends, new books, I look for the new worlds.

I am tired of analyzing myself.

My diary, my personal life so at odds with my exterior life. The split, the fissure is deep. How to restore the wholeness to the psyche that I knew in childhood, that I know in joyous moments. I need a guide.

When I am not dancing, working, writing, reading, singing, drinking wine, dallying, when there are no extravaganzas, no peaks to look out from, no eloquent gestures or speeches, I feel half dead. Boredom. I begin to think the absence is permanent; that the joie de vivre will not return; that I will not make new friends; that they will not measure up to what I experienced in the past.

The prolonged solitude. I do not even know why I am here. Have I murdered someone, stolen, hated? Judge! Judge! Judge! I am innocent! The more innocent, the more severe is your sentence. I am innocent! I do not deserve this sentence, this absence of joyous life. I am a dreamer. I have dreamed of travel to foreign countries, books, songs and dances, peasant girls. I will serve liquers to businessmen with a good smile! I can talk to doctors. They ask me; "Are you a doctor, a poet? How do you know these things?" I know! I know! The masks are transparent. I am the child saying to the king and his court: "You are naked!"

Each turn in the labyrinth is startling.

I don't want to be a madman. I don't want to be black with despair, nor a holyman with visions, nor the great artist wallowing in his separation from the world, nor the anchorite that befriends the desert. The desert I don't want. I am thirsty, hungry for love, intimacy, dance, song, life, life!

I smoke my hand-rolled cigarettes, drink beer, and sit in an absolute quiet. Today typed two pages from a thirty-five page draft that I hope to send to *The Phoenix*. Two pages in three hours. I am tempted to throw it all away. Start again. New. I will get those pages typed. And I will walk briskly up to the bar and order: "Scotch, sir. A

double Scotch."... The thread through all this. If only I could be sure of the touch, to know: *This is the thread.*

Jeane has left for Europe. On the emergency flight! Everything she leaves behind I have to burn, again, in the fire. I wish I could have left with her.

Reading Nijinsky's *Diary*. His diary is awesome in its simpleness, its child-like purity. "God" and "feelings", the unconscious. Nijinsky drowned in those depths of the unconscious, yet I can't help but feel that others were responsible, that they somehow hastened his death. They could have helped him, sheltered him. They could have confessed their ignorance of his "God", his "feelings," his genius. He should have been cared for. His vision was awesome. The extraneous should have been cared for by others, not Nijinsky. He should not have been forced to be concerned about money.

His diary concludes: "My little girl is singing: 'Ah, ah, ah, ah!' I do not understand its meaning but I feel what she wants to say. She wants to say that everything — 'Ah! Ah!' — is not horror but joy!"

Like the lamplighter every evening I make the rounds to turn on the lights of this apartment complex for the night. I was walking up a back

stairway with a cigarette in my hand. The ashes were getting long on the cigarette and I tipped them into my hand, thinking I would find some receptacle to put them in. The hallway floors are oak and there is a regal air and order in these mansions that inhibits me from letting the ashes fall to the floor as I would in a shabby hallway. Besides, I have to vacuum these hallway floors.

At first I almost automatically let the ashes fall, but because of the light on the stairwell I kept them in my hand. Because of the light I felt unconsciously someone might see me or might see the ashes on the floor and trace the clues to me, since I am the only one, besides Ted and Lora, who uses the backstairs and smokes. If I dropped the ashes on the lighted stairway, Ted and Lora would find out. I often look upon Ted and Lora as father and mother. Fearful of their condemnation and lack of approval.

As I reached the top of the stairs, it became dark. The light only illuminated part of the hallway. In that dark area of the landing I automatically let the ashes fall from my hand onto the floor. I caught my unconscious conniving! How ridiculous, I thought. Anyone could see the ashes on the stairway in the daylight; but I had thought the darkness would hide me flicking the ashes on

the floor. Not even my conscience would see me in the dark. In the darkness I could hide from my conscience. Do others do this too? Commit transgressions against others and their own standards in the darkness? Are all our crimes, angers, and violences to each other committed in that darkness? What do children do in the dark, before they sleep, when they think that no one, not even their conscience and reflective eye, is looking? Do they always see ghosts in that darkness?

August

Typed another eight pages for *The Phoenix*. Tired. What do I write tonight in my diary.

There is no one around. I say that all the time to myself. There is no one around. I begin to see myself as the buffalo in his wallow. I am alone. All the friends I lost in the last Great Fire are with their loves, their mistresses, their jobs, their t.v. sets, their drugs, their ideas about how to live a rich and full life. I am always alone, doomed, with curses thrown on me by Mephistopheles himself. Doomed to wander like Odysseus. I am not arrogant to say that all my life I have gone from port to port with the lost Ship. Port to port, harbor to harbor, city to city. The dogs all welcome me, the lonely women all welcome me, the lotus eaters welcome me. I am always welcomed! They

like to hear me bellow loud as the cathedral bells:

Rejoice!

The day beckons another hero. I step forward for the sacrifice. I always die. I move on with the ship and pack my sea-bags with a few shirts, pans, and my books. My books. What will they get me. I am not the great artist. I am not Rimbaud. I am Richard Solly. The name doesn't resound with the resonance over the continent.

I leave behind the dogs, the lonely women, the lotus eaters, the old friends, the familiar street signs, the taverns, the businessmen inured in their jobs, their meaning in life. I leave all the distillations and step back into the centrifuge. The sediment is recorded. I learn how to survive each fire. I can write about every kind of fire, the colors of the fires: blue, red, yellow, black, gold. I know all the artifacts that have burned in those fires, the ideas, the words, the feelings, the hopes, the great thoughts I saw burn. I am not afraid. I walk proudly on two animal legs. I would ride on the back of a tiger if I could. I will! I will!

In the mornings I awake and find that I haven't become God. No matter how many entreaties I make, no matter how many vows I pledge, I awake in the morning mortal, terribly, terribly, mortal. Other mortals will divine my mortality.

I will become the good man, the son of the Virgin, Osiris.

I dream and dream and dream and dream.

A woman, love, wine, quiet, music, work, books, friends, travel, merriment, intimacy, clowns, beggars, places to eat, a little left over money to buy books, paper, heaps of erasers, carbons, a tavern, a cheap movie theatre, mythical old men and women promenading through the streets without any teeth in their smile, cold and snowy winters, pleasant spring weather, none of the torrid heat of summer but lots of swimming ...it would all awake in the morning, hungry again for unknown vistas. Eternally discontent I am. Anxious. The hurried man of Carnevali, hurrying, hurrying, hurrying.

I am jealous of those men who have one wife, one true lover, children, and live in one city happy—and will always live like that!

I will learn to sit like Buddha.

Work, work, work! It is exhilarating!

Ted and Lora took me to a department store and tried to convince me to buy a five speed-bicycle. I may, but I thought: How would I pack that in my sea-bag?

Minneapolis library. On the way home, waiting for the bus, I met a young man selling flutes. He

had a bag full of bamboo flutes he had made himself. He played a flute while we waited for the bus. He tried to show me how to play it. We both got on the same bus and we talked about the flute. I told him how I thought the flute to be a solitary instrument. How music changes the atmosphere. He played on the bus. As I was getting off the bus, he gave me a flute!

It seems that all day I walk around working, composing songs, writing paragraphs for books, lines of poetry, writing pages in my diary as I work outside painting the house. How divorced is the writer from real life, or from the reality that bores and isn't full enough to captivate and engross the writer.

I write and write while I am walking the streets. It seems that even during moments of conversation with others I am recording. I walk around with an inner camera and a tape-recorder, retranslating, deciphering the hieroglyphics. Trying to distill the essences.

The writer, even during the moment, is reflecting, decoding, memorizing the events, the conversation, each subtle gesture made. He often betrays the moment. He has within him a consciousness that wants to capture the flight of movement, to capture and distill it into vials and

later, in his underground laboratory, to recreate life. He is a bit of a monster, an alchemist. He wants to recreate the life, the crimes, the intimate revealings, the tears, and the joys into a magnificent orchestra. Not only the essences but all of the peripheral, the very gestures to evoke the baton of the conductor. To put the godliness and holiness of life into his work.

Listened to Michael Debbor play the piano.

Later Ted said: "When he sat down and played the piano, just listening to the music and the way he played, I could tell he was a man of deep feeling and sensitivity. But there was something in his playing that made me uneasy. I kept wondering how he could play so well, with such deep feeling, but in certain areas be so lacking. I didn't know what it was until he revealed to us that he never had a piano lesson in his life! It's difficult to imagine anyone playing that well without a lesson."

"When a person is playing music," Ted said further, "they might as well be naked. I can see completely through a person playing an instrument. I can see the depth of their feelings or their shallowness, their weaknesses, their strengths."

I tell Ted that the reason he has such an acute ear for malfunctionings of a machine is because of his sensitivity to rhythms. I can be operating a

machine around the house and Ted will look at it strangely, cock his head and diagnose the cause of the dissonance of its sound — while I am not even aware of anything being wrong.

Lora gave me the conductor's score of Wagners' *Tristan and Isolde* to read. She tries to explain to me the "mathematics" of music.

Ted says: "My sympathy goes to the dancer. When they are dancing, they are totally exposed to the audience. They can't cover up any of their mistakes as a musician can. In dance, even the naive viewer can detect flaws or errors. Fate is kind to the musician. A musician can be lean or plump, tall or short, eat large dinners, live and work till old age. But not the dancer, or even the writer. They often live short lives. The musician is the favorite servant of the Arts."

Depression.

I want to be the good man, sympathetic to other people, understanding and able to untangle their labyrinths for them, to give direction. Yes, I want to be a teacher. A dream. My own life is so confused.

I don't want to be the great artist. I'm more like the idiot in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamozov*. But I am Richard Solly. What value do I

have for the world. My writing, does it teach others how to live? It certainly states clearly how I live. Confused.

I'm afraid of the uncanny simpleness of it all. It is so, so simple. But I want to sound intelligent about it all. I want to go through life revealing the last line of every poem. Dreams.

Men are afraid of their anima. I am afraid of my anima, the personal life. Afraid that I cannot accept my shortcomings, my faults. I do not accept them. I want to change them all, elevate my life into goodness, a supreme goodness.

I want to perform miracles for other people. I want to help them. I know what troubles the entire world. I see it clearly. It is a mystery. I can't articulate it. But it must be spoken. It is God. How would all this be accepted in print?

I want to be able to say: real life is present.

I know what we are all frightened of. It is our selves. We go to the extremes of camouflage, plotting to disguise our selves. We are afraid to reveal them because we are afraid others will reject and mock us.

Those sensitive to this rejection and violence of other people are afraid, too, that their selves will injure others in the same way, unconsciously. But it doesn't have to be so. We close our own eyes,

create the darkness we need to commit crimes against others. We become unconscious. Consciousness will turn on the lights for the child in us, so that we won't have to be afraid of the darkness.

Gentleness, compassion, and intimacy.

It is so simple. Genius will not interfere. We can think in our heads, play with grandiose ideas, write poetry, listen to music, play, dance, practice our prestidigitation with words, sculpture, build edifices with jewels; we can sit in cafes; we can still live simply with others, loving, playing, laughing. We can still work and live purely as the light.

Schizophrenia is not healthy. The lotus eaters bless even schizophrenia. It is not healthy. We split ourselves in pieces and pieces. We discover our selves in the world this way. In pieces. The thousands of moods, temperaments, masks, so many! So many, many selves.

The answer, the thread that touches upon each self. The core.

I'm looking for the core, the essence.

Is it even possible?

I think this all may be stupid. I don't want to appear stupid to others. Why? I want them to think I am intelligent. I understand Rimbaud's

Illuminations. I want people to think I am intelligent because I want them to be impressed with me. I want somebody. I want their approval because I understand every word in Nijinsky's *Diary*. It is all perfectly lucid to me. Why did they think he was mad? What happened?

I don't want people to think I'm stupid.

This is my disease. We all have diseases, areas where we are crippled. I want to dance. I confess my weakness. Why? What good will come of it?

Let us all lie quietly in bed, confess to each other, and love through the whole night, the entire day.

I want to grow towards the Sun.

(To be continued)

EDITORIAL NOTE

(Some questions for this time of human crisis)

In what provisional dimension of Eternity could beings who had attained the beginnings of spiritual freedom (beings who had made their way through millions of years of enslavements within changing forms in the vast prison of primal consciousness with its blinded unquestioning automated & innately structured instinctual obedience — beings who became impelled to challenge Death & make their way past that dread apparition into the forbidden & perilous upper life of higher consciousness — beings whose inner eyes of conscience thereby had been opened and who began thenceforth to bear as individuals the spiritual consequences of their acts—beings who became like the gods, knowing good and evil—beings with conditional free will afflicted by a dual awareness of their provisional mortality and their essential divine holiness beyond all divisions of good and evil—beings who became volitional participants in the travail of Creation)—in what provisional dimension of Eternity where no aspect of the struggle has been foreordained but only foreseen could any such beings become so dehumanized that they would long to flee back into the deceptive haven of primal consciousness, long to surrender their partially won freedom & human vision back to the authoritarian "gods", long to close their inner eyes of conscience from the present scene of worldwide tortures and massacres and cower back into the dismal nether depths and spiritual darkness and become a terrible species of self-blinded bat-men?

In what provisional dimension of Eternity do many such beings fearfully obey laws of rulers who decree they must continue to sacrifice their sons on the bloody altar of War in the slayings of their fellow beings? Why do they still accept decrees declaring it a crime to refuse to serve in War or to desert from War? Are such beings — apart from deformed & sadistic defectors from humanity — afraid to identify their rulers? Surely they

know who Nick's son is, rich hard Nixon with the thinly disguised swastika balefully displayed in the center of his name. And surely they know who Hell's son Rockefeller is with the mockingly slight alteration of a single stroke in the first letter of his arrogant name. They like to display their contempt through their involved games with words in their mocking charades amongst us. Remember the underling selected as the law & order *vice* president, the grotesque sacrificial Agnews of Nick's son? And now there is another underling, the present lowly transitional deputy of the high princes — the obsolete Ford carrying out their orders and bestowing a grotesque plenary indulgence upon Nick's son and appointing as the new *vice* president the small-eyed one who is planning a swift accession and martial take-over of America in these last days of their regime. And in the midst of their maneuvers is that fat-bellied liaison officer — that servant of Hell's son lent temporarily to Nick's son — the gutteral voiced one mockingly decorated with a munitions funded Nobel "peace" award — the sepulchral voiced one disguised as a Jewish refugee from Hitler's massacres — the one who proclaims "power" (genocide) is the "ultimate aphrodisiac" and who gluts his necrophiliac lusts in the Christmas bombings of Vietnam in obscene mockery of the dissident rabbi Jesus & in the ongoing slaughters in Chile and Cyprus.

And do these self-elected and internationally interlinked rulers think that by their enlarged concentration camps & their ever more lethally equipped police & their boldly justified cages & torture cells & their old bogey of Death that they can quell us? Don't *they* know that so long as only one human being remains faithful to humanity they can never overcome us? — that they can never block the central wellspring of Creation from which they themselves and humanity issued forth? — and that without us *they* would be doomed to be stranded in this provisional dimension of Eternity which they for so long have usurped?

CORRESPONDENCE SECTION

(*Editorial note*: *We receive a number of supportive and loving letters which we would be too abashed to share with you. They'll have to be filed away in our archives awaiting a time, if ever, when some university or college aquires* The Phoenix *papers. Meanwhile those most cherished of letters sustain us through our bleakest periods, even though we know how far we fall short of such open-hearted generosities.*)

Hi. I need to tell you I'm sorry for taking so long to write — there's really no excuse for it except that I've been in a letter-writing slump recently. And that isn't much of an excuse, seeing as I've been meaning to write you for nearly a month now . . .

Well, whatever, I want to tell you *thank you* for everything. I got my copy of *The Phoenix* on the second of January, — delayed by going through the hands of a number of staff here before they let me have it. I read it that night, and well, I got embarrassed . . . Seriously. I mean, I loved reading Doug's letters, but as I told you I didn't remember what I had written, so I found that part to be awfully personal. I guess it really surprised me because I became involved in that county jail scene again in my mind, and then I realized that now other people would see that too. That was a strange revelation because one of the results of being in jail has been a withdrawal into myself and my letters

then that part of me is opened up. Even Doug's letters were embarrassing in that regard.

But I don't know if that's a criticism of the article, being in print. But then, as I thought about it more, I it's more like my own personal reaction. At first that reaction made me feel very peculiar about those things wondered if maybe the personal-ness is needed to let people understand what this scene is like, and if that's true then it's OK.

D'you know something else that helped to ease my embarrassment? I started thinking about how I don't really have any privacy in my letters anyway, because of all the institutional people who read and analyze my mail. I've become so accustomed to that fact that I don't think of it much, though originally it really bothered me. When we first went into prison, I always got hung up when I tried to write to someone, because I wanted to say personal things but I didn't want the deputies to get their noses into my private business. But I got over that fast, since I had no other way of communicating, so I was forced into opening myself up to snide remarks about my personal life. I learned then that all I have to do is to be comfortable with myself, and then no one's knowledge or comments would hurt me or cause embarrassment. So now I should just apply that understanding to the article and it sure as hell can't be any worse to have just anyone read those letters than it is for these police to read them . . .

Well, enough of that. I don't know if you've heard what other people out here thought of the article already, but I know that Doug liked it a lot. And so did

my folks. There were a couple of very technical mistakes in it such as the fact that my brother is older than I am. Mike's 21 and I'm 19. And I think a few dates were wrong too, which isn't important either. I thought of a few general criticisms or ideas about ways it could have been laid out such as putting both Doug's and my letters in chronological order together, along with brief paragraphs about what was going on in the trial at the time but those are mostly idle thoughts because the important thing was that the letters were printed. I haven't been keeping a diary though, because my work-school-correspondence schedule keeps me so busy already, without adding something else to write.

I'm not going to write any more here tonight because I'm extremely tired and about to fall asleep. But I would like to hear from you when you get time — I know you'll be working on your next issue of *The Phoenix* and will be busy, so whenever you find some free time is all I'm asking for. I'm still working in the law library and taking a science class, so my time is pretty full and I'm doing as much with it as I can. I'll write again soon, and I'll be waiting to hear from you. Take care of yourself. Love always,

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A few years back I visited Unit 14 at Clinton Prison in Dannemora. The solitary confinement cells there re-

vealed to me that the keepers of that institution will go as far as they are permitted in displaying cruelty and disinterest in the human condition.

Another visit to a solitary confinement cell in the old Wilmington Prison of Delaware was etched into my mind. A 16-year old boy named David was isolated for 65 days because of his refusal to have his Afro hair cut. He clutched my arm as we visited him and begged us not to leave because he feared what would happen to him. Our subsequent protest about that Delaware horror chamber resulted in our no longer being welcome within that State's institutions.

I was recently admonished for daring to make an equation of the imprisonment of convicted felons in the USA and the Jews of World War II.

The issue which I insist on pressing is not what determines people to be encaged and controlled, but the similarity of the needs of people who are the controllers. In reading Wiesel's *Night* I am convinced that some of the correction personnel whom I met at Dannemora and Wilmington would be interchangeable with the faceless masters of Auschwitz. These are men who will enforce their annihilation to whatever degree the political atmosphere permits. They will follow Hitler's master plan of extermination or New York State's quiet and painful dehumanization, caring little whether the inflicted be Jew, Black, convicted felon or enemy of the State by birth.

We cannot at once be outraged by the silence of the World War II Germans and then justify our prison treatment because of crime in the streets.

One need only read in Elie Wiesel's *Night* how Jewish sons, amid the relentless agony and torture of their enslavement, stole bread from their fathers in order to survive to understand what submission of the body does to the spirit and the soul.

Wiesel was advised by an elder in his last days at Buchenwald, before his release: "Listen to me, boy. Don't forget that you're in a concentration camp. Here every man has to fight for himself and not think of anyone else. Even of his father. I'll give you a piece of sound advice. Don't give your ration of bread and soup to your old father. There's nothing you can do for him. And you're killing yourself. Instead you ought to be having his ration."

A few weeks later, after being freed by the American soldiers, Wiesel — like all released prisoners — felt no sense of celebration. He writes of his immediate post-release . . . "One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of the mirror a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me."

None of us can measure the pain of Elie Wiesel or any other survivor of enslavement. Wiesel's horror has an innate enormity because of the multitudes who were disposed. But the agony of each individual is theirs alone and for us to ignore that is to be oblivious of the majesty of Elie Wiesel's survival.

David Rothenberg, Editor
Fortune News 29 E. 22 St. N.Y.C. 10010

Until Tuesday afternoon, May 7, 1974, I had never been in Orchard Park, New York. I do not know much about Orchard Park, not even how many reside there, but my impression is that it should bear the title "Arrest Capital USA" and that giant signs should be posted around the town warning travelers to go around its borders because it may be impossible to pass through without an encounter with the New York State Police, which has a barracks there.

On May 7 my husband Wally and I were arrested a few hundred yards beyond that police barracks. We endured six days and seven nights in Buffalo's Erie County Detention Center for having a bad muffler. On May 13 three young friends, Wendy Rawlins, Sherry Johnson, and Ken Przybylski, who had hitched from W. Virginia to support us, were sentenced to 15 days in the Erie County Penitentiary for trying to hitch a ride to see us. They attempted to carry out in their personal lives the philosophy of nonviolence which we share which includes regarding no one as superior or inferior including people who wear badges. They felt the necessity to deny that some people have the power to judge others even to the point of throwing them in cages.

Regarding Wally and me, we were driving through Orchard Park in our 1965 Dodge pickup with home-made trailer attached, carrying our goods and our wood stove from New Mexico to Massachusetts. We were on Route 20 in search of a place to get the muffler repaired. When Officer J. N. Gleason waved us over we naively thought he could tell us where to get help. But Officer Gleason did not state his reason for stopping us. He

brusquely asked for our drivers' licenses. We produced them. He asked to see registration papers. We were chagrined to discover that our Arkansas truck papers registered under *Neighbors*, did not show the "per Wally Nelson" we thought they bore, and were further dismayed to find we had lost or misplaced our trailer registration. Nevertheless, we did not think we had committed a crime and figured the matter could be straightened out with the facilities available to the police. But Officer Gleason had become so aroused by this time that I asked why we had been stopped in the first place. He replied it had seemed suspicious that we had Arkansas plates on the truck and New Mexico plates on the trailer; he had not noticed the broken muffler until I mentioned it.

From this point the sequence of events is blurred; it all happened too swiftly and there seems no logic to latch onto. After questioning us minutely about where we were going; where we were coming from and why; what we had in the vehicles; Gleason ordered Wally from the truck and directed him to lean against it for search. Wally would not do this, but did hold his arms away from his body, feeling instinctively that Gleason needed assurance that he was not threatened. Gleason patted Wally down. It was here that mention was made of arrest. But our status was so unclear that when Wally was ordered to drive the truck to the police barracks, Wally asked if he were under arrest. Gleason said: "You're under arrest." In which case, Wally said, he would not drive the truck. By now I was out of the truck, and evidently the arrest applied

to me too, for we were both ordered into the patrol car.

We told Gleason we could not possibly comply with his order — we didn't believe in jails. And anyway, what for? Gleason radioed another officer who appeared in seconds. We were handcuffed and shoved into separate cars. At the barracks, another patrolman appeared to help carry us into the building and deposit us on a bench.

My pocketbook was confiscated and its contents emptied onto the counter. There were *Hahs!* when they came across over $7,000 in checks. By this time the atmosphere seemed somewhat more relaxed and we were not reluctant to explain that most of the money had been borrowed for homesteading. A call to the Valley National Bank in Espanola, New Mexico, assured them the largest check, $3,998, was a bona fide check issued to me. The checks were returned to me along with my pocketbook.

We continued to inquire about the results of the registration investigation, but were never given a definitive answer as to whether sufficient information had been received to allay any fears that the vehicles might have been stolen. I had imagined that once it had been established that the vehicles were legally in our possession we would be released to go on our way, having then only to decide if we would honor tickets for a broken muffler.

But no, the troopers told us, we would have to stand trial for "obstructing government administration", and wouldn't we go nicely with them to see the judge. We declined, and after a couple of hours the judge was

brought to us. Judge Schohl walked in, took a seat behind a desk and read the charge of obstruction to my husband. "Do you want a lawyer, Wallace?" he asked. "I do not," said Wally, "but I'd like to talk with you as a person." "Just answer my question," directed the Judge. "Your bail is $500." "I don't care to post bail," said Wally. "Take him to the Erie County Detention Center for trial on May 14," said the Judge. Addressing me as Juanita, the Judge went through the same procedure. As Judge Schohl left Wally said, "I hope you'll be able to sleep well tonight." Judge Schohl said, "I will," and left.

The troopers carried us out, shoved us into the cars again, drove us to the Detention Center, this time without handcuffs, carried us from the cars and deposited me on the floor of the holding cell. I was toted into another room after refusing to give information to the desk clerk and put on the floor of a room bare except for narrow steel benches on the wall and an alcove with toilet and basin. There a kindfaced, white haired matron tried unsuccessfully to get information from me and instructed me to remove my clothes. I refused. Shortly after this stalemate an affable male official appeared and in fatherly tones explained jail procedures and tried to cajole me to sit on the bench. Gradually, when the "you are a guest here" approach failed, the officer became annoyed and the tone became less fatherly and more commanding. In the end, he and another male guard jerked me to my feet and ripped off my sweater, leaving me naked to the waist. The fatherly man stalked from the room saying, "She's got to be

crazy." The matron pleaded that I step into the alcove and remove my jeans. "You don't want the men to undress you, do you?" "No," I said. She slipped the prison gown over my head, then pulled off my shoes, socks and pants. The rectal search and fingerprinting were never executed. A wheel chair was brought in and I was rolled to the second floor women's quarters and laid on the shelf bed on Cell F 10. The door was clanged shut by remote control and there I remained, double locked, for six days, during which time I did not eat though I was offered food three times each day. I left the cell only once, to visit with Larry Faulkner of the American Civil Liberties Union. I was permitted the Sunday visit only after giving solemn assurance that I would return to the cell under my own power.

Meanwhile, Wally had received rougher treatment. A guard unable to accept the noncooperation twisted Wally's arm in taking him to the cell and hit him on the back with the flat of his hand.

Trial date was moved from May 14 to May 13. After six days in tiny cells, taking only water, we were glad. By this time no one expected us to walk until we were free. Again we were transported in separate vehicles to the Orchard Park police barracks. We were carried into the building through a back door and in the corridor saw our three friends stretched out on the floor. We were utterly dumbfounded to learn they had been arrested around noontime for hitchhiking, and by our own Officer Gleason.

We were taken into the courtroom, and grinned to see a lot of friendly faces. Again we faced Judge Schohl.

We attempted to tell him we would make a statement, but not as judge and judged. For a while it looked as though we would simply be returned to jail. Wally was finally able to initiate some dialogue with the Judge and Larry Faulkner, sitting with us as a friend but not as official legal counsel, managed to inject a note of sanity into the proceedings. He had called New Mexico and obtained the registration number of the trailer and the information that insurance in that state is not mandatory. The district attorney moved that the insurance and registration charges be dropped, in spite of Officer Gleason's last-ditch stand to make the insurance violation stick. Judge Schohl sentenced both of us, even though I had not been driving, to time served for the inadequate exhaust. The affair is not quite ended, though, for we have been ordered to appear for a jury trial on June 7 on the matter of "obstructing government administration."

With our trial disposed of, Judge Schohl ordered the three hitchhikers taken into a first floor courtroom and banished everyone else from the building.

No one was present except the three victims, Schohl, the D. A., and Gleason. Wendy, Sherry, and Ken were sentenced to $50 or 15 days, and were taken on stretchers to the Erie County Penitentiary. They refused to wear prison garb or submit to prison procedures; Wendy and Ken fasted most of the time and Sherry, who is five months pregnant, fasted five days. Ken's beard and hair were shaved. They were released on May 29. Sherry and Ken are home at Rt. 3, Box 171A, Spencer, W. Va. 25276. Wendy's travelling. —*T. H.*

We are defendants in an accused case of rape in the Town of Tarboro, North Carolina. We were tried on December the 3rd, 1973 in Tarboro Superior Court. We were convicted December the 9th and the death penalty was pronounced against us.

We now face the death penalty because of unjustice and predijuce. Also because we turned down the state's offer to plead guilty with an intent to commit rape. We said we were not guilty of the crime rape, therefore we wasn't pleading guilty to anything. We also feel that justice wasn't rendered unto us during the entire matter. More because of predijudice, which we and others even smelled as we walked through the Courtroom doors. It was altogether an unfair, unjustice, and predjudice trial and we will fight right down to the very end. We feel that the battle can be won and the truth of the matter can be revealed.

We pray day and night that the truth will be revealed. We ask you all to pray along with us.

Jesse L. Walston *Vernon L. Brown* *Bobby R. Hines*

North Carolina State Department of Correction
835 W. Morgan Street Raleigh, N. Carolina 27603

(Note: Julian Bond, who heads *The Southern Poverty Law Center* which never takes any fees from those it defends, appeals for help in the struggle to save these innocent young black men from becoming new victims of Governor Wallace's Alabama gas chamber in the State's ongoing racist conspiracies & perjuries & legalized murders. Please send a contribution, however small, to *The Southern Poverty Law Center*, 119 S. McDonough St., Montgomery, Alabama 36101)

I found the quotation from Mumford on Maxwell and the doctrine of singular points I was looking for:

"Often the most significant factors in determining the future are the irrationals. By 'irrational' I do not mean subjective or neurotic, because from the standpoint of science any small quantity or unique occasion may be considered as an irrational, since it does not lend itself to statistical treatment and repeated observation. Under this head we must allow, when we consider the future, for the possibility of miracles, on the grounds developed by Charles Babbage in the *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise* and by James Clerk Maxwell in his famous letter on singular points. By a miracle we mean not something outside the order of nature but something occurring so infrequently and bringing about such a radical change that one cannot include it in any statistical prediction.

"Maxwell's doctrine gives the insight needed into the situation to correct our visual view of the human prospect. He pointed out that even in physical systems, no less than in life generally, there occur, at rare unpredictable intervals, moments when an infinitesimally small force, because of its character and its position in the whole constellation of events, was able to effect a very large transformation. This doctrine allows for the direct impact of the human personality in history, not only by organized movements and group action, but by individuals sufficiently alert to intervene at the right place for the right purpose. At such moments a single human personality may overcome the inertia of formidable institutions." — *Robert Head* Alderson, West Virginia

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Eric Felderman, a 28 year old writer presently living in New York City, recently taught literature at Yale.
Richard Toney we know little of beyond that he now resides in San Francisco.
Charlotte Cho-lan Lee earns her livelihood as a potter and has a work-shop and studio on the Bowery in New York City. This is her first published story.
Bly Francis is the pen-name of a woman writer who lives in Omaha.
Stephen Ecton, a native of Bowling Green, Kentucky now lives and works in Japan. He & his wife have a 3 year old daughter and a 2 year old son. He previously worked with the New York City Youth Board.

Isabel

Tom Page works as a reporter in Wichita, Kansas.
J. Mangen Ellis has his home in Estes, Colorado.
Hervey White (see notes in previous issues).
Gabriel Cooney lives at Morning Star Farm with his wife Elizabeth and their infant daughter Isabel.
Richard Solly, who is neither rich nor hard, lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.
Gerald Fleming is a San Franciscan.
Isabel, infant daughter of Elizabeth & Gabriel Cooney, contributes her delightful new presence amongst us.
Annabel, daughter of Eliza Cooney, has been contributing the delight of her presence here since her birth in November of 1970.

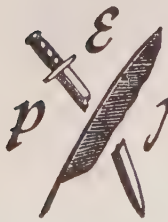
Annabel

WRITERS IN PRISON

There are 321 writers in prison in thirty-three countries. P.E.N. assists these writers and their families. Won't you help P.E.N.?

From the Charter of P.E.N. International:

Members pledge themselves to oppose any form of suppression of freedom of expression in the country and community to which they belong.



American Center

156 Fifth Avenue NYC 10010

Contributions are tax exempt.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Political Prisoners

In over 60 countries throughout the world, hidden away from the public, the press and from families and friends, there are thousands upon thousands of political prisoners. Brutally disregarding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which most members of the United Nations have agreed to observe, many governments imprison persons who bravely criticize their policies on fraudulent charges of being either criminal or insane, very often without even the semblance of a trial or an examination.

Governments have no inherent right to silence in this way persons who are critical of them. They have no moral right to crush dissent. But at the present stage of human society they still have the power to do so. And they will continue to use that power until world-wide indignation is sufficiently aroused to stop them.

In Turkey 900 persons have been condemned by military courts; over 10,000 men, women and children are imprisoned in concentration camps in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon); uncounted thousands of dissenters in Soviet Russia are in slave labor camps and insane asylums; over 100,000 men, women and children are now in the underground prisons and torture cages in South Vietnam; uncounted thousands others are suffering in the terrible prisons and concentration camps of Brazil, Chile, South Africa, Iraq, Uganda, Pakistan, Libya, South Korea, Rhodesia, Czechoslavakia, Israel, Northern Ireland, China, United States, and many other countries. Many of these political prisoners are being physically and psychologically tortured and degraded. Many are being killed. In Chile — just as the C.I.A. did with its 'Operation Phoenix' program in South Vietnam — the Junta, under directions from the C.I.A. and lavishly paid by C.I.A. funds, has murdered over 30,000 persons and unknown more thousands are being tortured in prison camps before being executed in turn.

Amnesty International Frees Political Prisoners

Amnesty International is an independent non-partisan organization originated in England in 1961 and working to end the physical & spiritual degradation, torture and murder of political prisoners. *Amnesty International* struggles to free prisoners of conscience who have neither used nor advocated violence, or to at least improve the cruel conditions under which such prisoners suffer.

Membership in *Amnesty International*, ever growing, is now over 30,000 in 60 countries around the world. Members, working in groups, adopt specific prisoners of

conscience and send continuous letters to high officials of the persecuting governments and to prison officials. They spotlight these specific cases and enlist aid of concerned influential people. They visit continuously the embassies & consulates of the prisoners they have adopted. They confront officials directly while travelling in countries where their prisoners are being held. And they write directly to the prisoners and extend help to their suffering families.

Members of *Amnesty International* demonstrate continuously to the prisoners and to their governments that no one is forgotten, *that other fellow beings care.* They protest actively & ceaselessly against injustice, mass arrests, imprisonments without trial, mock trials, and torture.

Prisoners have been released from the torture cells of some of the most repressive governments as a result of continuous letters from concerned individuals. In 12 *years of operation Amnesty International members have won the release of over* 7,000 *prisoners and have improved the prison conditions of many thousands more.*

In activities beyond prison adoption *Amnesty International* has sent teams into many countries to investigate reports of torture. Thousands of documented reports have been issued as a result of these investigations and *Amnesty International* is now mobilizing public opinion in its world wide *Campaign for the Abolition of Torture.* Similar mobilization is being encouraged for the abolition of capital punishment and for the recognition of consciencious objection as a fundamental human heritage and to thereby assure non-violent refugees their innate human status, including the right of asylum.

There is still much more struggle ahead. In the London headquarters there are files of thousands of individual political prisoners awaiting to be adopted. If you care for the human future, join or assist *Amnesty International* now.

These are the ways you can become involved:

Form a new group (*Amnesty* staff will assist you).

Join an existing group in your area.

Work with the *Campaign To Abolish Torture.*
Spend several hours a week circulating petitions.
Send out telegrams ($3 per night telegram) to defend prisoners in extreme danger.
Set up a meeting in your home, church, school, union, or any other organization (*Amnesty International* will instruct and help you).
Become a member. $15.00 yearly membership fee brings you the issues *of Amnesty International*'s newsletters.
Contribute a sustaining donation.

Make checks payable to AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL at their West Coast Office. All contributions are tax deductible.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
P. O. Box 1182 Palo Alto, California 94302
Telephone: (415) 325-9907

If you really care about
your fellow human beings

REFUSE TO PAY TAXES
TO THIS CRIMINAL
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

REFUSE TO BE A COLLABORATOR
IN THE ONGOING TORTURES
AND EXECUTIONS OF OUR
SISTERS & BROTHERS &
THEIR CHILDREN
IN CHILE

UNITE WITH OTHERS WHO CARE
AND START PROTECTING THOSE
CLOSEST AND DEAREST TO YOU

IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK
HERE IN AMERICA!